FIRST THINGS

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Rowan Williams • George Weigel

The Bard, the Black, the Jew • R. V. Young

Publick Religion: Adams v. Jefferson • John Witte, Jr.

Gibson's Passion • Russell Hittinger and Elizabeth Lev

Evangelicals in the Dock • Peter J. Leithart

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Books:

Geoffrey Wainwright • *Philip Bess*
Wilfred M. McClay • *John J. Reilly*

The Public Square

Richard John Neuhaus

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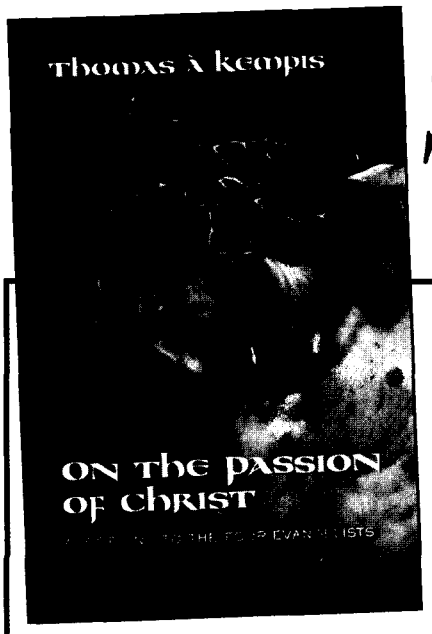

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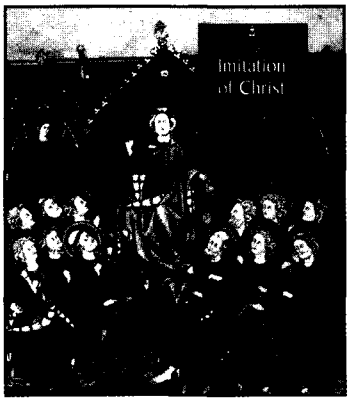

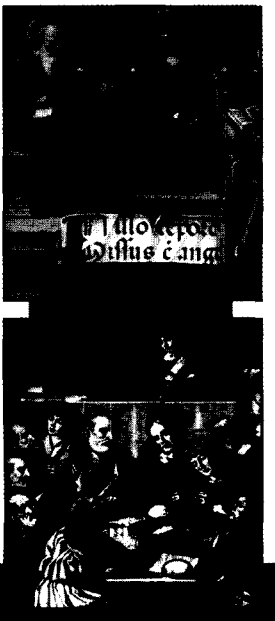

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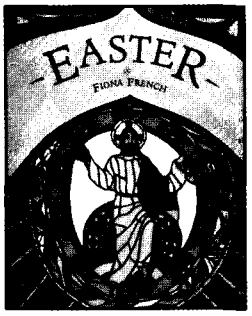

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Episcopalian Preferences Revisited

I very much appreciated reading Philip Turner's ruminations about "The Episcopalian Preference" (November 2003). I have thought about similar issues regarding the state of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA), most especially since the Presiding Bishop defended the General Convention's confirmation of Gene Robinson to the episcopate at Lambeth this past October. Unfortunately, arguments that suggest that this is just how the democratic process in ECUSA works do not square with Scripture, tradition, or reason—the very tools, articulated by Thomas Hooker, by which Anglicans discern truth.

However, American democracy as expressed through the Episcopal Church is not the only problem. It is not just a question of how ECUSA does its business but, more importantly, of how Anglicans of any variety and in any nation (even orthodox ones like myself) go about their business. What is our authority? To whom do we appeal for definitive and binding answers? The simple answer is stated above in what Anglicans refer to as "Hooker's stool." Anglicans assume that if we devoutly apply Hooker's methods to any crucial theological question we will arrive at a very sound answer. Mr. Turner's numerous examples clearly demonstrate that this is not the case. Our repeated failure to reprove and adequately rebuke heresy calls into serious question our theological system.

Although I love our Anglican ethos and believe that there is a great deal to commend within it, the question of binding authority is a serious one that requires our utmost attention. American democracy (within the Church) and Anglican polity and practice both need to be addressed.

Donald P. Richmond
Dean of Christian Spirituality
St. Andrew's Theological College and Seminary
Apple Valley, California

I may be the thousandth person to point this out, but if so, it only underscores the necessity of repeating it: Isn't Philip Turner drinking from the same stream he identifies as the source of the problems in his beloved ECUSA?

Mr. Turner aptly clarifies for us how ECUSA has lost its mind—that is, lost its knowledge of how to make a decision. He rightly ties this ecclesial insanity to drinking from the stream of the Enlightenment rather than the stream of a "preestablished moral order." Thus he says, "For moral agents who think of themselves as *individuals*, *selves*, and *persons*, sexuality becomes . . . both a marker of identity and a primary way of expressing the preferences that define identity." Bravo. He correctly follows this stream of thought to the bitter water that is poisoning his communion, the implication that "we therefore ought to be co-actors and co-creators with God to make the world over in accordance with inclusivity." This, he says, is how his church can miss the grave error of ordaining a homosexual bishop and taking the wrong side in the culture wars that "rage over abortion, euthanasia, and sexuality."

But doesn't this argument also apply to the ordination of women? Mr. Turner states, "I am a staunch, even fierce, supporter of the ordination of women." Does his position come from the "preestablished moral order" he seeks? Is it not another ex-

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ample of the individual, the self, the person using sexuality as a "marker of identity"? Does it not come from an attempt to "make the world over in accordance with inclusivity"? The ordination of women is part of the same moral stream Mr. Turner decries. It is an issue that must be referred to the "preestablished moral order" in which God created, by two discrete acts, male and then female moral agents for differing, though complementary, roles. The work of a priest on the altar or in the confessional clearly requires the male role. In fact, such work simply cannot be performed by women because of the fundamental moral nature of the female.

I thank Mr. Turner for a thoughtful analysis of what must make him heartsick. He helped me to understand my journey to the Catholic Church from evangelical Christianity, which often doesn't even acknowledge that there is a culture war going on. I was drawn by the moral authority of the only Church which, despite her flaws and imperfections, has not yet lost her mind. Come on home, Mr. Turner.

Thomas Hickey
Palm Harbor, Florida

Philip Turner replies:

The letters by Thomas Hickey and Donald P. Richmond raise important issues. Mr. Hickey asks if my analysis of ECUSA's actions at its last General Convention (actions that gave tacit approval to homosexual relations) does not apply as well to the practice within that same church of ordaining women. Mr. Richmond asks an even more basic question, namely, does Anglicanism have within it any "binding authority"?

One of the most effective ways of besting an opponent in an argument is to show that the very argument he makes leads to a conclusion he is anxious to deny. And so Mr. Hickey asks if the case I make against the recent actions of ECUSA's General Convention does not also undermine its previous action that gave approval to the ordination of women. Is it not the case, he asks, that both the ordination of women and the approval of homosexual relations spring from the same view of moral agency to which I object? That view removes agents from a moral order to which they are obligated to conform, and locates them as individuals, selves, and persons in a social economy in which they are free to pursue their own particular preferences (as long as they do no harm to others).

In asking this question, Mr. Hickey in fact wishes to make two points. One is that the ordination of women "is part of the same moral stream Mr. Turner decries," and the other is that my support for the ordination of women does not come from the "preestablished moral order" I seek to defend. The first of these objections strikes me as the more powerful of the two. In response, I should like to argue that in many, if not most, ways the pressure to ordain women did indeed spring from the feminist movement within Western Europe and America. This movement has its roots in the view of moral agency I identified as now regnant within Western culture. It is important to note, however, that this view, despite its weaknesses, has brought with it genuine moral gains. It has called attention to the moral significance of individual persons and their well-being. It has also provided an engine (though not the only one) for a host of positive social changes, the integration of the races being the most notable. The problem, therefore, is not that people think of themselves as persons with rights, selves with a particular history, and individuals with a unique nature and value. The problem is rather that as persons, selves, and individuals they locate themselves within a moral order whose foundations go no deeper than the value attached to the free pursuit of individual preference.

The issue, then, is not that the same view of moral agency lies in part behind both actions by ECUSA's General Convention. The issue in the case of women's ordination is whether or not the self-conception and preferences that have led women to seek ordination have a basis at a deeper level than personal preference. In short, do the aspirations of women to be ordained cohere with God's will for the order of the Church and with a divine call to ordination? At this point, Mr. Hickey might well wish to bring his second point into play. According to him, the preestablished moral order I defend assigns to women a different "moral nature" from that of men. That differing moral nature suits them for different roles. The moral role assigned to women, he asserts, disqualifies them for ordination.

In response, I can only say that I find this objection rather strange. What, for example, might it be about the "moral nature" of St. Catherine of Siena or Mother Teresa that disqualifies them? They hardly lacked the moral qualities that qualify one for the exercise of authority. The usual arguments against the ordination of women focus either on the novelty of the practice, its justification (or lack thereof) in Holy Scripture, or the iconic character of the priest who represents the (male) Christ. My own view is that none of these arguments are convincing, though they are not lacking in seriousness. However, to say that women's "moral nature" disqualifies them I find both idiosyncratic and troubling.

Mr. Richmond's question about authority within the Church touches upon the most pressing question now facing the Anglican Communion—a question so central that an

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inadequate answer will most certainly spell the end of Anglicanism as a communion of churches. As long ago as 1948 a committee of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops chaired by Archbishop Carrington of Quebec asked the question, "Is Anglicanism based on a sufficiently coherent form of authority to form the nucleus of a worldwide fellowship of churches, or does its comprehensiveness conceal internal division which may cause its disruption?" Since that time, if not before, the Anglican Communion has been in search of an answer. Mr. Richmond is correct to imply that the Robinson consecration makes further delay potentially fatal to the Communion.

He is incorrect, however, to say that the only resource Anglicans have when disputed issues arise is "Hooker's stool" of Scripture, tradition, and reason. Indeed, Anglicans understand these to be authoritative resources to which reference must be made when disputed issues arise, but they do not constitute the sum of authority within the Anglican Communion. Among Anglicans, responsibility for the good order of the Church is placed in the hands of bishops by custom, rites of ordination, and canon law. In the exercise of this authority, Anglicans have held that bishops are not to act in a manner independent of other bishops unless the issues at hand are "indifferent" or "adiaphorous." As with Orthodox Christians, Anglicans have no central or overriding authority as do Roman Catholics. The order of the Anglican Communion depends upon episcopal collegiality. It is precisely this collegiality that the independent and novel actions of ECUSA bishops have broken. It remains to be seen how the bishops of the Anglican Communion, and particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury, will react to the break in episcopal collegiality that the consecration of Gene Robinson represents. Upon their reaction depends the credibility of the claim that the Anglican churches scattered throughout the earth in fact constitute a communion rather than an agglomeration of ecclesiastical bodies.

Whose Bible?

In his article "A Bible for Everyone" (December 2003), Alan Jacobs laments the absence of a widely shared English Bible. I second his lament. In this world of biblical Babel I too long for a Pentecostal remedy. Professor Jacobs then makes a case for using the English Standard Version (ESV) as this widely shared Bible. No matter what its merit, I doubt this translation will ever be widely used for a reason that became obvious to me only last summer.

At my Baptist seminary I attended a meeting where representatives from Holman Bible Publishers were distributing free copies of the New Testament that is included in the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) translation. After an in-depth conversation with the Holman people, I finally grasped the root motive for yet another translation. The publishers explained that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) produces billions of pages of Sunday school and mission material every year. In past years the SBC had used the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible in its publications. As they explained, this usage was just becoming too expensive. The SBC was paying Zondervan Publications millions of dollars every year to quote copyrighted words from the NIV. That is no longer a problem. SBC is now using its own in-house translation, the HCSB.

Prof. Jacobs also credits the editors of the ESV with a "humble recognition" that the King James Version (KJV) translators wrote with elegant force. He notes that ESV editors left three verses of the KJV "virtually unchanged." There is a reason that they could do this beyond humble recognition. The KJV is in the public domain. If ESV editors had used any recent translation as a base document and then made superficial changes, the editors would have landed in jail. "Deferring to existing excellence" is good in theory, but these days it is not possible to select an elegant translation of Scripture (except for one in the public domain) and then selectively update and improve it. Sure, that is what the KJV translators did, but back then people did not fuss about copyright. As for the present, there is only one way that the ESV could become the universal English translation of the Bible: HarperCollins UK would have to relinquish the copyright and place this version immediately into the public domain. The ESV could then become an "open source" Bible. Maybe then I would invest in an ESV Bible and recommend it to others.

Chris Foreman
Mill Valley, California

Unhappy Surprise

As someone who is addicted to FIRST THINGS, I would like to register, let's say, a raised eyebrow at Peter Candler's "Johnny of the Cross" (December 2003). I sympathize with the sufferings of Johnny Cash and am sorry that he is gone. I also understand that, though I am not a big fan of his music, there are many people who are and feel his loss all the more keenly. However, I must say that I did not expect a publication of the caliber of FT to run a piece elevating the barroom travails of a country-western singer to the level of the sufferings of the great saints of the Church, nor the author of such ballads as "A Boy Named Sue" to the level of the greatest poetic mystics in world religious history. Come

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now, gentlemen. We are all sorry to lose Mr. Cash, but really. . . . Have I simply missed a subtle satire? Just wondering.

Ken Hendrickson
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, Texas

Meeting at the Altar

I read with rare dismay Richard John Neuhaus' imprimatur on the Roman Catholic practice of closed communion ("Getting Along at the Altar," Public Square, October 2003). As a former Catholic and a Presbyterian minister who attended the papal mass during the Pope's visit to St. Louis a few years ago, I was reminded of how painful it was to be told that we are "brothers in Christ" but not welcome at the altar. My reasons for questioning the practice are not merely emotional, however (there is enough emotion driving theology today to make one's head ache), but biblical and theological.

Father Neuhaus argues that the core issue is ecclesiology. I respectfully disagree. The core issue is eschatology. The question, simply put, is: When "people come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29), who will be there? Will that table be only for Roman Catholics? If it is not the case that the eschatological banquet is a Roman banquet (or a Lutheran one), then should not our table fellowship here reflect that reality? Biblical eschatology should drive our ecclesiology.

It remains a stain upon the Church that while Jesus was renowned for eating with tax gatherers and sinners, certain denominations cannot manage to share the table with others who trust and believe in him. The truth is that it is not a Roman table or a Lutheran table, but Christ's table, and he has always welcomed those who put their trust in him, much to the chagrin of the religious authorities.

(The Rev.) Thomas C. Pfizenmaier
Bonhomme Presbyterian Church
Chesterfield, Missouri

Since Richard John Neuhaus makes reference to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) in "Getting Along at the Altar," some clarifications about the LCMS understanding of ecclesiology are in order. The central figure in the founding of the LCMS, C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887), did not think "that God established the true visible Church on earth in St. Louis, Missouri in 1847." Already in 1861 he had rejected this idea when it was put forth by a pastor in Brooklyn. "If you want to make the visible, orthodox, . . . holy, Christian Church . . . [into] the visible Lutheran Church then . . . there was no visible orthodox Church before Luther . . . which is impossible."

Father Neuhaus posits the "sharpest contrast" between LCMS and Roman Catholic ecclesial understanding of the true Church. He may be correct in his evaluation. But it is not because the LCMS teaches that the "true Church is constituted, in effect, by a school of theology and those who adhere to it." The LCMS teaches that all those whom God has called through faith belong to the Church irrespective of their level of theological understanding.

Charles E. Ford
Department of Mathematics and Mathematical Computer Science
Saint Louis University
Saint Louis, Missouri

RJN replies:
The 1847 reference was intended as hyperbole, although it is worth noting that Walther had to correct others who thought that was what the LCMS taught. I think I'll stay with the "school of theology" statement, however, since in LCMS thinking *publica doctrina*—meaning Christian theology construed according to the way the LCMS construed the sixteenth-century Lutheran confessional documents—is the chief constituting mark of the true visible Church. I did say in my comment that "some in the LCMS held a more nuanced version of the teaching," and Professor Ford is obviously in that number.

Libertarians and Cannibals

In Richard John Neuhaus' discussion of the ongoing debate about the end of democracy ("The End of Democracy Again," Public Square, December 2003), he quotes James Q. Wilson's accurate definition of the libertarian view as "no state has the authority to restrict conduct affecting only one's self and one's consenting partner." This view, according to Wilson, prohibits state laws "against prostitution, bestiality, heroin consumption, physician-assisted suicide, or gay marriage." But this libertarian list of activities theoretically exempt from legal restriction is hardly exhaustive. What about cannibalism? By now, most people have heard about the German cannibal who advertised over the Internet for humans who would consent to be slaughtered by him. Half-a-dozen prospects met with the cannibal but chickened out at the last minute. Finally, he found an adult who would consent to be slaughtered—and so, by mutual agreement, one slaughtered and ate most of the other. From a libertarian perspective, what's wrong with that? If mutual consent is the only blessing they need to engage in cannibalism, how can they be stopped? And won't the problem get even worse when hungry libertarian cannibals run out of consensual meals?

T. Dan Tolleson
Houston, Texas

Heathen Schools

Regarding an item about John Derbyshire (While We're At It, December 2003), I have what I hope is a

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helpful suggestion: If Mr. Derbyshire doesn't want the commemoration of his Savior's birth "mucked about with"—as it was at his son's Christmas program—he should take his son out of that godless, anti-Christian public school and enroll him in a Christian school that truly honors our Savior. I'll never understand Christian parents who place their children in heathen schools and then complain that these schools are insufficiently Christian. Weird.

John Lofton
Laurel, Maryland

Catholicism and Capital Punishment

In your review of E. Christian Brugger's *Capital Punishment and Roman Catholic Moral Tradition* (December 2003), you state that Professor Brugger "argues against the moral legitimacy of the death penalty, in agreement with statements of John Paul II that have been incorporated into the Catechism of the Catholic Church. His argument is the more credible because he recognizes the gap, if not contradiction, between what appears to be current teaching and centuries of Christian tradition on this question."

Not just Christian tradition, but the Scriptures as well. (See Exodus 21:14, Luke 23:39-43, and Romans 13:4.) Pope John Paul II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae* that "the commandment 'You shall not kill' has absolute value [only] when it refers to the innocent person." The Catechism states that because "legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others . . . the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." (See § 2265-2267.)

What's new is the argument that "as a consequence of the possibility which the state has for rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.'" (§ 2267, quoting *Evangelium Vitae*)

The question becomes, then, what is "rare"? Pederast priest Father Geoghan was killed by a convicted murderer who obviously wasn't rendered "incapable of doing harm." Then there's the duty of the government to defend public order (see § 2266).

In any event, the Church has not condemned all executions. Those who seek to use the authority of the Church to further their own political agendas should heed the Code of Canon Law, which states that since the laity have "freedom in secular affairs . . . [they] must be on guard, in questions of opinion, against proposing their own view as the teaching of the Church."

Don Schenk
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Past Its Prime?

It should not be necessary to have to bring to the attention of Richard John Neuhaus that Union Theological Seminary (UTS) is not, as stated in your December 2003 issue, "now almost defunct" (While We're At It). As an active alumnus, member of the Alumni/ae Council, and frequent participant in many of the seminary's offerings, I find such a comment not only flippant and erroneous, but an insult to the Seminary's administration, faculty, students, and board. I believe an apology is in order. Believe me, Union Theological Seminary will still be a vibrant presence long after FIRST THINGS has ceased publication.

(The Rev.) Thomas J. Philipp
UTS Class of 1962

RJN replies:
Defunct means to have finished a course of life. The life of UTS I had in mind was when—many, many years ago—the seminary was a leading influence in Christian thought and a major cultural presence. In that respect, I believe UTS is defunct, although one should not rule out the possibility of resuscitation. The "almost" in "almost defunct" is an acknowledgement that UTS continues to exist. Although its financial and other problems are a matter of public knowledge, it is quite possible that UTS, as an institution, will outlive this journal. If and when FT no longer serves the purpose for which it was established, it should cease publication.

Correction

In the February issue, the name of the author of the poem "Ledges" was incorrectly given as Bernard Scoll. The author's name is in fact Bernard Scott. We regret the error.

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Opinion

Gibson's *Passion*

Russell Hittinger and Elizabeth Lev

From mosaics and music to paintings and plays, the arts have proven to be a mighty vehicle for retelling the Bible and bringing its stories vividly before our senses. A special intensity marks the art created for the Lenten period. Allegri's *Miserere*, the moving rendition of Psalm 51 sung on Good Friday, Niccolo dell'Arca's *Lamentation of the Dead Christ* with its terra-cotta figures circling in wild grief over the dead Christ, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the poetic journey lasting from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, are but a few of the great Lenten works that can move the imagination to consider different aspects of the passion. In *The Passion of the Christ*, scheduled to open in theatres on Ash Wednesday, Mel Gibson adds a work of cinematic art worthy to be mentioned with these classics of Christian culture.

Gibson's *Passion* is bound to change our estimation of how a film can portray the life of Christ. Until now, movies about Jesus generally have been of two kinds. The first—perhaps to avoid trespassing on sacred terrain—abandons any ties to a canonical text. Here we can think of the whimsical *Jesus in Montreal*, or the hootenanny "gospels" of *Godspell* or *Jesus Christ Superstar*. There are also those provocateurs who try to win an audience through the "unauthorized biography" approach, such as Martin Scorsese in his film version of Kazantzakis' *Last Temptation of Christ*. Films of this sort pay the price of making Jesus appear smaller and less compelling than the figure we can encounter in reading or, as the case may be, in questioning the canonical texts.

The film that most nearly succeeds in this "relevant Jesus" mode is Pier Paolo Pasolini's avowedly Marxist rendition of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964). (Gibson surely learned from Pasolini, as he makes use of the little town of Sassi Matera, where Pasolini also filmed his gospel.) Pasolini's cinema-verité shots, nonprofessional actors, and monochrome photography make a visually riveting movie, one that disarms our liturgically and textually informed imagination with its strange and sometimes grotesque iconography, particularly the faces of its common people. If pure film makes what we know depend upon what we see, Pasolini's movie comes very close to being pure film. Yet because he is so determined to interpret the life of Jesus as a Gramscian allegory of popular liberation, Pasolini makes Jesus less interesting than the rest of the cast of truck drivers, waiters, and prostitutes he recruited for the film. The theme of class liberation also makes for unintended comedy. After the resurrection, for example, the camera follows peasants running gleefully through the fields with scythes and pitchforks only to encounter Christ waiting for an audience before ascending into heaven.

The second kind of gospel film makes a serious effort to tell the canonical story by means of a visual tableau. The best-known example is Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), which ploddingly covers the camels and magi, the teachings and parables, the miracles, plots, and subplots of Jesus' life. The beautiful faces and rich settings have a tapestry-like quality, but we never quite forget that we are watching a 371-minute-long visual ornamentation of a textual narrative. For religious people, and probably for most nonbelievers, it is perfectly safe viewing—better, no doubt, than a spaghetti-western gospel—but it is not a work of art that haunts the viewer. A stronger entry in this category is the *Gospel of John*, currently showing in theatres. Advertised as a "word-for-word adaptation" of the Fourth Gospel, narrated by Christopher Plummer, it is religiously serious precisely because it adheres to the canonical text, but it does not fully transcend the genre of documentary.

It is thus demonstrably difficult to satisfy the demands of cinematic art and canonical text. But Gibson's *Passion* is a new kind of film which does just that. In the tradition of Lenten art, he focuses intensely on the climatic moment of the Christ saga, intensifying the power of its sacramental aspects. From the agony in the garden, where Gibson begins, to the pietà at the foot of the cross, Jesus does what he teaches. In the sacred text itself, the last twelve hours of his life contain only the tersest dialogue. The parables have all been spoken. The disciples have slunk away. From here, the question of the Christ is telescoped by Gibson into what we see—or, more accurately, what we are able to watch.

Zefferelli's movie is comparable to a Ghirlandaio painting—exquisite, but the figures occupy only half the canvas. By contrast, Gibson's figures are in the style of Michelangelo, filling the screen, looming over us, threatening to enter our space. It is unnerving art. When the Roman soldiers call out "vertere crucem" the audience tenses. The soldiers lift the cross, prop it on its

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side for an agonizing moment, and then let it fall over towards us. As it crashes to the ground, an audible gasp sounds in the theater. The viewer is denied the detachment of looking through a window into a faraway world and is drawn into the scenes as a humble, perhaps helpless, participant.

The emphasis on the visual is accentuated by the sparse dialogue in Aramaic and Latin, making it all the more necessary to pay attention to what we see rather than what we hear. Gibson remarked in a recent interview that "Caravaggio's paintings don't have subtitles, but people get the message." In the version we saw at a screening in Rome, subtitles were included, but not many, and they didn't provide any psychological refuge. Nor do the few flashbacks of Jesus instituting the Eucharist and washing the apostles' feet, of the young Jesus with his mother, or of Jesus protecting the adulteress from the mob's stones. These flashbacks give some context, but mostly they offer the viewer a brief moment to catch his breath before returning to the visual assault.

Gibson has taken an audacious gamble by filling the screen with images that are undeniably brutal; few will be able to watch the scourging of Jesus without turning away. Though the movie is fairly fast-paced, the scourging is long and drawn out, seeming never to end. It begins with a caning, but just when one thinks, "that was unpleasant but not as bad as I expected," the soldiers pull out a spiked scourge and begin a new round of battering. Later, when the gates of the city are thrown open for the ascent to Calvary, we see Golgotha on the horizon and wonder whether we can traverse that distance with Jesus.

Ultimately, *The Passion of the Christ* is about witnessing and bearing witness. On one level, the film is calculated to make us want to turn away and go home. At the outset, Jesus tells his disciples in the garden that he doesn't want them to see him in such a condition. He worries about what they are soon to see: a suffering servant who looks like anything but a king, and whose tortured body will seem quite beyond repair.

Thankfully, as the scenes become harder and harder to watch, the viewer is offered an example, a guide as to how we are supposed to react to the increasingly disturbing images. This comes in the form of Jesus' mother, brilliantly played by the Romanian actress Maia Morgenstern. Though Mary is the person most affected by these shattering events, she also understands better than anyone the necessity of what her son must do, and she consents to his mission and her own role in it. She in turn shows the audience what they must do. During the scourging, we see Mary with her head lowered, barely able to support herself as she hears the incessant beating of her son. As we think to ourselves, "no mother should have to witness such a thing," she gathers her strength, lifts her head, and continues to look. If she can, we can. Then, in the harrowing pietà scene at the end of the film, Mary looks directly out at the viewer as she holds the body of Christ, reminding us with her glance that we, too, have been witnessing these events, and that it is now we who are called to bear witness to what we have seen. Like Caravaggio's *Deposition*, Gibson's film places the bulk of responsibility on the viewer.

This emphasis on the role of Mary far outstrips what Pasolini or Zeffirelli was able to imagine. Where Zeffirelli's Mary, played by the hauntingly lovely Olivia Hussey, elicits compassion, Gibson's Mary provides comfort. Like the Eve who accompanies Adam in every scene in the Sistine Chapel vault, Mary, it seems, is always present in Gibson's *Passion*. Her face is the most reliable clue to the meaning of the unfolding events.

She is paralleled on screen by Satan, played by Rosalinda Celentano as a black-cowled, androgynous bystander. After the scourging, Satan holds a grotesque child in mockery of the old Adam, and also of Mary's eventual pietà. Then there is the remarkable confrontation in the film between Satan and Mary. As Jesus climbs towards Calvary, Satan glides through the crowd, feeding on the tangible wickedness in the air; Mary is on the other side of the road, trying to reach her son. She locks eyes with Satan, as determined as Satan is smug. Gibson's disturbing technique of filling the screen with Jesus' body, almost allowing him to tumble into our laps, is contained visually only by the fact that Mary constantly touches, holds, and comforts the corpus. We find ourselves thinking, "thank God someone else will keep this mess from falling onto us." To be sure, Gibson employs a mélange of different iconographic traditions; but no other film we have seen has so powerfully depicted the ecclesial and corporate Mary. When she approaches the cross and kisses the feet of Jesus, the camera closes in to show her lips covered with the blood of Christ—the bride inebriated with matrimonial wine.

But all of this makes Gibson's *Passion* nearly the opposite of the arcane and politically fraught tradition of the passion play. Such performances were often staged to incite the audience to choose sides, to "save" the integrity and honor of Christ by constituting a kind of party against Judas, the Jews, and the mob in Pilate's courtyard. Had Gibson used the power of film to give this twisted but all-too-human political stereotype a new lease on life, concerns about the film stirring up anti-Judaism or hostility against nonbelievers would be justified. To his credit, however, Gibson denies the

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audience any shred of political or religious triumph, or, for that matter, defeat. Even a viewer who already knows and religiously believes in the final outcome of the story must struggle to keep watching, which is humiliating in its own right. There might be reason for scholars and religious authorities to raise questions about Gibson's synthesizing of distinct scriptural accounts of the passion, or about his use of extra-biblical iconography. But it is hard to imagine anyone coming out of Gibson's movie with an appetite for a religiously politicized passion. If anything, this is the definitive post-passion-play passion.

Last year, theological criticisms and concerns were expressed on the basis of an unofficial script apparently stolen from Gibson's production company. Whatever the provenance of the script, this criticism was bound to miss its target because the film depends almost entirely on what the camera shows rather than on dialogue. Though the film occasionally draws on extra-biblical sources, the theological outlook it presupposes is standard Christian fare. Gibson read the visions of the Venerable Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich, an eighteenth-century German stigmatist and mystic. The Romantic poet Klemens Brentano (author of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*), put the visions into writing, beginning with the *Dolorous Passion* (1833). The book is a series of simple but graphically detailed compositions of time and place. One of Gibson's scenes is taken directly from Emmerich. After the scourging, Pilate's wife Claudia gives linen cloths to Mary and the Magdalene, which they use to mop up the sacred blood. Emmerich also "sees" Jesus on the Mount of Olives looking at the very grotto where Adam and Eve took refuge after being expelled from Paradise; Satan tempting Jesus, saying that the restoration of Adam is too great a burden for one man; and, at the cross, Jesus as the second Adam asleep, from whose side is brought forth the new Eve. Indeed, Gibson's movie begins with Jesus crushing the head of the serpent in the garden, and Adam-Christ/Eve-Mary typology is apparent throughout it. Still, the question of how much of this imagery was inspired by Emmerich's visions is inessential, for such imagery and ideas abound in traditional Christian liturgy, hymnody, and iconography.

Gibson says that he set out to "transcend language with the message through an image." Chances are that even the film industry, skeptical and skittish about the project, will have to recognize his artistic triumph. How its millions of viewers will reckon with the movie is another story. We think that it will induce humility rather than triumphalism. The film is so enthralling that perhaps some viewers will have to remind themselves that it is just a movie and not a substitute for the New Testament, much less for sacramental liturgies or the stations of the cross familiar to so many Christians during Lent. If, having seen and endured the film, Christians are able in a fresh way to wonder at the vault of the Sistine Chapel, if they can humbly return to their churches to participate in the spoken and sacramentally enacted Word, then Gibson's *Passion* will have proven to be something even better than what it certainly is—the best movie ever made about Jesus Christ.

Russell Hittinger is the William K. Warren Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Tulsa.

Elizabeth Lev teaches Christian art and architecture at Duquesne University's Rome campus.

Evangelicals in the Dock

Peter J. Leithart

It's called straining a gnat and swallowing a camel. At its annual meeting in Atlanta in November 2003, the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) voted to permit Clark Pinnock and John Sanders to retain their membership in the society. The two had been charged with denying the ETS statement of belief. That statement has two parts, one affirming the inerrancy of Scripture and the other affirming the doctrine of the Trinity. Pinnock and Sanders were charged with violating the first clause, which states that "the Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs."

These charges were first brought by Roger Nicole at the ETS meeting of November 2002. The gathered scholars, by majority vote, referred his charges to the ETS Executive Committee for further investigation. In October 2003, the Executive Committee met with accuser and accused in order to determine what report to make to the upcoming November 2003 general meeting. In regard to Pinnock, the focus was on his book *Most Moved Mover*, which included a number of statements that, Nicole argued, "violated the inerrancy clause of our doctrinal statement." One of Pinnock's footnotes (number sixty-six on pp. 50-51, now famous in ETS lore) received the most extended attention. In it, Pinnock stated that prophecies of Scripture are not always fulfilled in precisely the way they were predict-

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ed. For example, he wrote that "according to Paul, the second coming seemed to be just around the corner (1 Thessolonians 4:17), even though we today know that it has still not come even in our own day. His word was, however, perfectly appropriate, given the fact that Paul thought that the coming could come at any time." Similarly, Jesus predicted that there would not be one stone left on another when the temple fell, which proved to be a "hyperbolic prophecy." According to Nicole, this claim that biblical prophecy could be mistaken in details violates the Society's statement on inerrancy.

In the case of Sanders, Nicole charged that he violated the statement on inerrancy by writing in his *The God Who Risks* (1998) that "some predictions in Scripture either do not come to pass at all (for example, the account of Jonah; 2 Kings 20) or do not come to pass exactly as they were foretold." According to the Executive Committee's report, Sanders "holds that many biblical predictions about the future in Scripture may not come to pass as described. However, in his view, these are not errors." Sanders claims that "prophecies in the Bible that predict future activities of moral agents—such as the prediction of Peter's denials (Matthew 26:30-34), or Paul's prediction of human behavior in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-5)—can only be understood as God's expectations of probable outcomes, not as God's trustworthy affirmations of what would happen." Since Sanders is an advocate of "open theism," the view that the future, being inherently unknowable, is also unknowable to God, he concludes that it is not "possible for God to give any unconditional prophecies of the future activity of free moral agents that will certainly (not just probably) come to pass."

The Executive Committee did refer the charges back to the Society for action. For Pinnock, they recommended unanimously that the charges "not be sustained." For Sanders, they concluded, by a 7-2 vote, that the charges should be sustained.

In the end, though, none of the charges were sustained by the members of the Society. Pinnock was able to avoid dismissal by his willingness to revise and explain the offending footnote and to address concerns raised by his other writings. He argued that "in Paul's thought the second coming could come at any time. Therefore, even though he spoke of it as near in this passage, he would not have thought of this as being certainly bound to happen in a few months or years." Similarly, "Jesus' assertion that not a stone would be standing on another is hyperbolic speech. The point was that the temple would be utterly ruined, as in fact it was. Greater precision was not required." Pinnock admitted that some statements in another book, *The Scripture Principle*, could be "improved on" and others "removed or modified," and declared, "I happily disown statements I may have made years ago which fall short" of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, a 1978 document that dovetails with the ETS doctrinal statement. These clarifications satisfied the Society: 432 voted to keep Pinnock, while only 212 voted for his expulsion.

As for Sanders, he too escaped dismissal, though by a less decisive margin. While the Society voted 388-231 to expel him, the margin fell short of the two-thirds majority required for expulsion.

So where is the gnat, and where is the camel? To challenge Pinnock's and Sanders' membership because of their views on the accuracy of Scripture is certainly not to strain out a gnat. Inerrancy has always been one of the defining features of evangelical theology, and rightly so. And it should be said that Pinnock and Sanders are correct that inerrancy does not mean that the Bible is scientifically precise. Years ago, I read a defense of inerrancy that struggled to explain the dimensions of the bronze sea in Solomon's temple. According to the Bible, the sea was "ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form . . . and thirty cubits in circumference" (1 Kings 7:23). The writer had trouble because dividing the circumference by the diameter did not yield pi. Apparently on the supposition that a ratio of three to one was too inexact for God, he offered a convoluted and wholly unconvincing explanation to show that the text actually did affirm pi. That kind of special pleading is wholly unnecessary for an inerrantist. By commonsense (i.e., nonscientific) standards, saying that a circle is three times as big around as it is across is perfectly true. By the same token, some of Pinnock's claims about "inexact" prophecy are incontestable (though others I would dispute) and they really do not touch the issue of inerrancy. Inerrancy does not affirm that Scripture is as precise as it possibly could be. It affirms that Scripture is true in all that it asserts.

The real issue is different and considerably more worrying. As noted above, both Sanders and Pinnock hold to "open theism," a form of theology that posits a God who is not omniscient concerning the "free" actions of human beings. As was pointed out in the ETS meeting's floor debate regarding Pinnock, it's not at all clear how an open theist can consistently affirm inerrancy; theology proper must eventually affect one's view of Scripture. Nicole in his charges made the connection between inerrancy and omniscience explicit, arguing that the inerrancy of Scripture depends on the inerrancy of God and questioning whether Pinnock's God is inerrant. Nicole claimed that "Dr. Pinnock has

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in his 'open theism' writings violated the inerrancy clause of ETS by representing God as canceling some prophetic statements that he made, by allowing that some prophecies remain incompletely fulfilled or even permanently unfulfilled . . . and by asserting human independence to the point of jeopardizing the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture." As Nicole put it to the Executive Committee, Pinnock's view of God makes it impossible to affirm that the Bible "is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs." To its credit, ETS is on record in opposition to open theism. In 2001, the Society passed a resolution affirming that "the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate, and infallible knowledge of all events past, present, and future, including all future decisions and actions of free moral agents."

Yet Nicole also insisted in his charges that his "single purpose" was "to prove that . . . Dr. Pinnock's view is incompatible with inerrancy" and that his charges were not "a discussion of God's foreknowledge." And the debate at the 2003 ETS meeting was wholly focused on isolated sentences culled from Pinnock's and Sanders' books. The camel of their basic theology was ignored as the scholars picked over a swarm of gnat-sized footnotes. So long as Sanders and Pinnock can mouth the word "inerrancy" (pronounced "shibboleth"), they can stay in, no matter what their wider theological commitments.

Given the structure of ETS—the minimalism of its doctrinal statement and the fact that it is not a church with disciplinary powers—there was little that the Executive Committee could do. I say this not to defend the final decision but merely to acknowledge that the fragility of the Society's theological consensus entails the structural pressure toward gnat-straining. What will ETS do if faced with "biblical" docetists, who mouth the word "inerrancy" but argue that the Son only *seemed* to take on human flesh in the incarnation? What will ETS do with "inerrantist" defenses of sodomy? What about "biblical" denials that the Bible actually teaches a bodily resurrection?

Warning that ETS is "potentially facing a crisis of identity," L. Russ Bush, Academic Dean of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and former ETS President, proposed that the Executive Committee "consider and recommend to the Society appropriate ways to clarify our Society's understanding of our doctrinal basis." That would be a salutary exercise, especially since Bush's adverb "potentially" seems altogether too sanguine. Perhaps the Executive Committee will produce a thicker ETS doctrinal statement—say, the Nicene Creed or the Formula of Chalcedon for starters. But it is entirely imaginable that ETS will heroically retain its commitment to the accuracy of Scripture, while slowly conceding, one after another, evangelical and catholic commitments about what Scripture teaches.

Before the discussion of Pinnock at the November 2003 meeting, the chairman prayed that the Evangelical Theological Society would not act like Pharisees. I suspect that he was praying that God would preserve ETS from legalism, harshness, and rancor. In fact, his prayer turned out to be something of a cruel irony. Pharisees, after all, were not known only for their legalism. They were also known for their marvelous capacity to strain a gnat while swallowing a camel.

Peter J. Leithart is Senior Fellow of Theology and Literature at New St. Andrews College, Moscow, Idaho, and pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow.

A Jury of One's Godless Peers

Robert T. Miller

Reading First Things may disqualify you from sitting on a jury, at least if a lawyer decides that such reading shows that you are too involved in the practice of your religion. Just ask the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, the federal appellate court with jurisdiction for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

First, some facts. As anyone who has been through the process knows, selecting a jury is a complex business. The court starts with a large pool of prospective jurors and the judge and lawyers for the parties interview them, rejecting some and choosing others until they have a full panel, usually twelve. If, in the course of this process, a lawyer thinks that there is a good reason to exclude a prospective juror (e.g., that the juror would favor one side or the other), the lawyer may object to this person "for cause"; if the judge agrees, the juror will be excused. In addition, each side in the case is entitled to a limited number of "peremptory challenges" (the exact number of these depends on the nature and complexity of the case), which allow the lawyers to strike jurors without having to state any reason whatsoever. Writing in 1769, William Blackstone described this ancient practice of the common law as being typical of "that tenderness and humanity for which our English laws are justly famous." According to Blackstone, we must all be "sensible what sudden

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impressions and unaccountable prejudices we are apt to conceive upon the bare looks and gestures of another," and so a man on trial for his life should be given the chance to keep off the jury someone "against whom he has conceived a prejudice, even without being able to assign a reason for his dislike."

So the practice continued in the United States—until 1986, when the United States Supreme Court decided, in *Batson v. Kentucky*, that litigants should not be permitted to exercise peremptory challenges based on a juror's race. Such discrimination, the Court said, would violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Given the history of racism in the United States, and especially because in some Southern states litigants might collude to exclude blacks from juries entirely, there was something to be said for *Batson*. But the Supreme Court did not stop there. In *J.E.B. v. Alabama* (1994), the Court decided that sex, too, would be an impermissible basis for the use of peremptory challenges. There was much less justification for this decision, not only because litigants were less likely to try to exclude women as a class, but also because there are usually too many women among potential jurors for litigants to remove them all using their limited number of peremptory challenges. But regardless, the Supreme Court had spoken.

One consequence of this development is the so-called *Batson* hearing, a proceeding in which, after a lawyer has peremptorily challenged a juror, the other side to the litigation, if it suspects that the strike was based on race or sex, may contest the challenge and force the opposing counsel to explain a basis for the challenge unrelated to race and sex. Of course, since peremptory challenges were originally intended to be exercisable for any reason or for no reason, *Batson* hearings can be absurd, as lawyers try to explain the unexplainable and give good reasons for actions that they were allowed to take without good reasons. Moreover, requiring courts to decide which explanations for the use of peremptory strikes are acceptable has produced a significant amount of legal mischief.

Which brings us to a lawyer striking jurors on the basis of their religious practices. In a recent federal case in New Jersey, *United States v. De Jesus*, the defense counsel demanded a *Batson* hearing after the prosecutor used peremptory challenges to strike two black jurors. The prosecutor then explained that he struck the jurors, not on the basis of their race, but because of their "heightened religious involvement." One of the jurors had said that he participated in civic activities at his church, read the *Christian Book Dispatcher*, taught Sunday school, and sang in the church choir; the other juror had stated that he was an officer and trustee of his church and that he read the Bible and related literature. The prosecutor concluded that these jurors would have difficulty sitting in judgment on another human being and so would be reluctant to convict.

This reasoning is in itself rather curious, since the usual stereotype about religious people is just the opposite—namely, that they tend to impose their values on others. Indeed, many secular people suppose that those who read the Bible are eager to sit in judgment, to say with St. Paul, "Those who do such things deserve death" (Romans 1:32). But however this may be, the judge accepted the prosecutor's explanation, and the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit affirmed, holding that, while challenges based on mere affiliation with a particular religious denomination may violate the Constitution, challenges based on a juror's "heightened religious involvement" do not. Quoting the trial judge, the Court of Appeals said that it is rational for a prosecutor to challenge a juror who reveals "a rather consuming propensity to experience the world through a prism of religious beliefs." You may thus be struck from a jury not for being a Christian, a Jew, or a Muslim, but only for being a rather devout Christian, Jew, or Muslim.

Perverse as it sounds, this outcome was predictable. Peremptory challenges have always been about prejudice, or, at best, about inferences based upon the meager and superficial information that lawyers can gather during brief discussions with prospective jurors. Prior to *Batson*, the messy and sometimes discreditable thought processes of lawyers who exercised peremptory challenges were shielded from public view, and thus any form of prejudice—whether against black men or Harvard graduates or women in tight clothes—was allowed to go unspoken and so unexamined. But once the Supreme Court decided that race may not be a factor in the process, it committed our courts to determining which forms of prejudice lawyers would be allowed to use in exercising peremptory challenges. It committed them, in other words, to elaborating and justifying a theory of morally acceptable prejudices.

Everyone recognizes that some forms of prejudice are worse than others, the basis for such distinctions generally being historical. In the United States, for example, where we have a long history of both de facto and de jure racial discrimination, we rightly think that such prejudice is gravely wrong and should be ruthlessly eliminated from our society. But beyond this and a handful of similar verities, people are apt to disagree about the relative moral badness of various forms of prejudice. One's judgments about such things will depend strongly on the details of one's moral philosophy. Pope John Paul II and Gloria

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Steinem, for example, will likely have different judgments about the relative badness of sex discrimination and religious discrimination and even about what kinds of conduct constitute forms of such discrimination. Hence we should expect that the theory of acceptable prejudices that the federal courts develop will largely reflect the values of federal judges—many of whom share the moral sensibilities of the secular liberalism that prevails, for instance, on the editorial page of the *New York Times*.

Not surprisingly, then, the theory of acceptable prejudices that the courts are developing prohibits peremptory challenges on the basis of race or sex, for racial and sexual prejudice are just about the only sins that cannot be forgiven in the church of aggressive progressiveness. Votaries of that sect will apologize occasionally for murderers, often for thieves, and always for adulterers, but never for racists or sexists. Sooner or later we can also expect a court to prohibit peremptory strikes made on the basis of sexual orientation; arguments to this effect have already begun appearing in the law reviews.

But what about religion? Liberalism was originally a theory of the state based on representative democracy and individual rights—a theory that was compatible and even harmonious with religion. There can be powerful religious justifications for such a system. But contemporary liberalism is much more than a theory of the state and its limits. Whereas the older liberalism required the state to allow individuals to pursue, within certain bounds, their differing understandings of the objective good for man, the newer liberalism requires individuals, at least in their role as citizens, to be entirely subjective in their understanding of the good. That is, in the newer liberalism, the supreme good, at least for all public purposes, is personal autonomy—a person choosing for himself, without any objective constraint, what shall be good and what shall be evil. The Supreme Court decreed this kind of liberalism to be the official ideology of the United States in 1992, when, in reaffirming the right to abortion in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, it gave us what Justice Antonin Scalia calls the "sweet-mystery-of-life passage": "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under the compulsion of the state."

And so, as Stephen L. Carter has written in these pages (March 2002), liberalism has a "religion problem" because religion, when taken seriously, provides a comprehensive view of God, man, and the universe; it is thus a natural competitor to this form of ideologically aggressive liberalism. The liberal state and religion, Carter says, "are in competition to explain the meaning of the world." Hence, Carter concludes, "The basic response of liberal theory to serious religion is to try to speak words that seem to celebrate it (as a part of the freedom of belief, or conscience, or the entitlement to select one's own version of the good) while in effect trying to domesticate it—or, if that fails, to try to destroy it."

Carter's conclusion may sound hyperbolic, but this is just what the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit did in the *De Jesus* case. When the court suggested that peremptory challenges made on the basis of mere religious affiliation would violate the equal protection clause, it did so because secular liberalism regards all religions as equally good (or at least equal); it would thus be wrong, on the liberal view of things, to allow a litigant to discriminate on such a basis. Here we have liberalism trying to speak some words to celebrate religion. But when it comes to a person displaying a "propensity to experience the world through a prism of religious beliefs," constitutional protections apparently disappear. As soon as religion becomes a serious competitor to liberal ideology, liberals are prepared to act against it. Religion that can be domesticated deserves toleration; religion that cannot be domesticated must be destroyed, and so the court allowed peremptory strikes on the basis of "heightened religious involvement."

Though the number of devoutly religious persons excluded from juries will probably be small, the symbolic significance of *De Jesus* is enormous. Call it yet another victory for the liberalism of personal autonomy in constitutional law—and another defeat for those who would like to prevent the denuding of the American public square.

Robert T. Miller is a John M. Olin, Jr. Research Fellow in Law at the Columbia University Law School.

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War & Statecraft

An Exchange

Rowan Williams

In October 2002, George Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., delivered a lecture on "Moral Clarity in a Time of War" [see FT, January 2003]. The lecture was a response to various statements from religious leaders in the run-up to the conflict in Iraq, most of which, in Weigel's judgment, exhibited a deplorable ignorance or misunderstanding of the just war tradition. Weigel sets out not only to dust off what he believes is the authentic heart of the tradition, but also to defend a reading of that tradition which would offer secure moral grounding for a preemptive U.S. action against Iraq, or any comparable "rogue state."

It is a formidable and sophisticated essay, building upon the author's earlier work on the theological definitions of peace and order and upon the extensive work over several decades of James Turner Johnson on just war in the modern age. With much of Weigel's critique I am in sympathy. I believe, however, that his account of the tradition is in one respect seriously questionable, and that his defense of preemptive action cannot be accommodated as easily as he thinks within the terms of classical just war theory.

First, though, my points of agreement. Weigel refers to recent work in the U.S. on the need for a "warrior" ethos of a fundamentally pagan kind to sustain us through the trials of late modern international politics; we need—so this style of argument maintains—heroism, ruthlessness, patriotic fervor, and a profound suspicion of moralistic or idealistic rhetoric that clouds our sense of what is possible in tragically constrained circumstances. As Weigel notes, this is effectively to say that morality has no public voice, that what he calls "statecraft" is beyond the reach of moral, especially religiously moral, principle; and he rightly rejects this as an unsustainable view for any religious person. Just war theory is a form of statecraft (i.e., it is an aspect of political ethics, which concerns how to do right in the conduct of ordered community life); it is a way of saying that war is not some monstrous aberration in human life, for which all standing orders are suspended, but is a set of actions requiring the same virtues as political life in general. As Weigel writes, "The just war tradition is best understood as a sustained and disciplined intellectual attempt to relate the morally legitimate use of proportionate and discriminate military force to morally worthy political ends." Interestingly, Weigel here echoes, without mentioning, the argument of Oliver O'Donovan in *Peace and Certainty* (1989) about certain justifications of nuclear deterrence—that the Cold War advocates of massive deterrence involving indiscriminate targeting were, like pacifists, refusing to see war as an activity among others with a possible ethical structure. The apologist for deterrence of this kind assumes a sort of Manichaean view that war is of its nature irrational and apocalyptic, avoidable only by threats of total annihilation.

Against this mythology, Weigel rightly claims that we must think about war in moral categories and treat it as essentially a *public* enterprise, as opposed to private violence. But here my doubts begin. Weigel accuses recent writers on the subject of presenting the tradition as having a "presumption against violence" and thus making it a "casuistry of means-tests," a set of hoops to be jumped through; and he says that one result of this is to focus attention unduly on what are usually called the *ius in bello* issues of restraint on the methods to be used in conflict. He claims that, in fact, the tradition has no such presumption and must be understood as beginning from questions about just

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cause, which are directly related to the defense of the political good of a society against aggression, the punishment of aggression against another, or of some other flagrant evil. Such aggression, Weigel suggests, doesn't have to be an actual event of military violence: the mere possession of weapons of mass destruction by a state whose regime may properly be mistrusted as an enemy of justice constitutes some sort of sufficient cause for intervention. Weigel finds terrorist networks to be enough like states to present even more obviously legitimate targets for preemptive action. At the same time, such networks are unlike states (even very bad states) in being not a mixture of good and bad, but "unmitigated evils whose only purpose is wickedness—the slaughter of innocents for ignoble political ends."

So to my first caveat. Weigel denies any presumption against violence in the tradition. But this is an odd reading of, say, St. Thomas Aquinas' discussion in the *Summa Theologiae* (II-II.40). Formally, this is a consideration of those conditions under which what would otherwise be gravely sinful would not be so. It is true to say that there is no specific discussion here of violence (to which I shall return in a moment); the focus is on the scriptural warnings about warfare, the sinfulness of disturbing peace, and so on. But it would be quite fair to say that St. Thomas is granting that there is a prima facie case against war, which is only resolved by appeal to the duty of the ruler to preserve peace internally and externally by the literal use of the sword (something explicitly allowed in Scripture). Private use of violence is wrong because a private person always has the alternative of resorting to law to seek redress; but if (as we might say) law itself is threatened, and the public good undermined, there is no higher court to look to.

Some of this is illuminated if we turn to Aquinas' discussions of violence (I-II.6.4; II-II.66.8 and 175.1). Violence is an external force compelling certain sorts of action; as such, it is bound to appear as against nature or against justice (since it takes from someone or some group what is theirs, intrudes on their territory, restricts the exercise of their freedom of choice, and so on). External acts may be subject to violence, though the freedom of the will can never be affected in itself. There is, however, a recognition that external force is sometimes used to accelerate a natural movement; in which case it is not exactly violence in the pure sense. The implication is that action which intends what is natural to human beings, even if formally coercive, is legitimate; so that action which employs violence of some sort for the restoration of a broken or threatened social order does not have the nature of sin. This is the basis on which a large part of Aquinas' discussion of legal penalties rests (II-II.64-65).

Public good is what is natural to human beings, the context in which they may exercise their freedom to realize the image of God. Confronted with action that is inimical to order, action that is "inordinate" in respect of public goods, the restraint on the freedom of others, the intrusion into what is theirs, and the privation of their personal resources that we normally call violence is not sinful. But in the nature of the case, only those charged with preserving the public good are competent and legitimate judges of the public good. An act of private redress, private vengeance, vigilantism, or whatever, may purport to punish inordinate behavior but it only deals with the offense to the individual, not the offense to the social body; thus it fails to heal the social body and even makes the wound worse. The private person must never use the violence that the ruler can rightly use, as a private person has the right of redress by legal due process.

The point of this long excursus into somewhat technical matters is to establish that Weigel's claim that there is no presumption against violence in classical just war theory needs a good deal of refining. The ruler who administers the law may use coercion for the sake of the common good in domestic policing and in international affairs. But such coercion will always need publicly available justification in terms of the common good, since otherwise it will appear as an arbitrary infringement of natural justice. The whole point is that there is precisely a presumption against violence, which can be overcome only by a very clear account of the needs of the common good and of what constitutes a "natural" life for human beings.

Now Weigel is clear about some of these wider considerations: he writes of "the long, hard, never-to-be-finally-accomplished 'domestication' of international public life." Likewise, he states that "the quest for ordered liberty in an evolving structure of international public life capable of advancing the classic goals of politics—justice, freedom, order, the general welfare, and peace" must serve as the "inner dynamic" of any pursuit of the national interest by the U.S. in order for it to be described as "just." My problem is that by denying that there is a presumption against violence in the tradition, Weigel denies himself the most significant touchstone in the tradition for discerning the rationale of using force: external constraint on human liberty is normally a bad thing, but it is not so when human liberty is exercised against the liberty of others or indeed against one's own dignity as a social and moral being. The point is that coercion is simply not to be justified unless it is answerable to a clear account of common *human* good. Even the

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security of a specific state has to be seen in the light of this broader framework. So to provide an account of coercion as a moral tool, we need to have a robust account of the balance of liberties in an ordered society, just as Weigel wants—but one, I suggest, in which it is understood that violence, as an external limit on the freedom of another, is essentially anomalous because the essence of healthy social life is the *voluntary* restriction of any one agent's liberty in the corporate act of social life. More specifically still, Christian doctrine, in describing the optimal human community as the Body of Christ, with all its biblical associations, considers the social unit as an exchange of free gift before it is a community ruled by coercion. If and when coercion is exercised, it is in response to situations in which certain citizens or subgroups are prevented from proper social action by the arbitrary violence of others. This is intrinsic to the exercise of law in our world, where voluntary self-gift is not exactly automatic.

This begins to suggest that the active reconstruction of justice in a society is not an optional extra to military engagement; but it also reinforces the point about which I agree most earnestly with Weigel, that war as a moral option is a tool for the promotion of specific social goods. As such, however, it is subject to the usual criteria by which means towards an end are to be judged—to considerations of "prudence." In the language of scholastic ethics, we must judge the fitness of means to ends. Or, more plainly, military options have to be weighed against other ways of securing or restoring justice. Weigel seems to assume that we have already gotten to the point where such a discernment has happened; not only coercion in general but military coercion has emerged as the only possible course. In what he says about terrorism, Weigel makes this assumption explicit: there is no point in asking what responses are appropriate to terrorism. "In circumstances where there is plausible reason to believe that nonmilitary actions are unavailable or unavailing," Weigel claims, "the 'last' in 'last resort' can mean 'only.'"

This suggests, uncomfortably, that there are circumstances in which you will know almost automatically when it is a waste of time to consider nonmilitary options; and the implication of earlier comments is that where terrorism is concerned this can be taken for granted, since terrorists have no recognizable political aims, or are devoid of political rationality. The assumption that an enemy can be regarded as devoid of political rationality is briefly but effectively discussed by Oliver O'Donovan in the essay mentioned above. There he argues that the principle of "total" deterrence (the nuclear threat) is presented as the only realistic option by assuming "an enemy . . . who cannot be made susceptible to the codes of honor and rational political interest"; but this, he points out, is to locate original sin or radical evil outside oneself (corporate or individual)—to assume that it is unproblematic to identify political rationality with one's own agenda. But such a view is the opposite of "realism."

Which brings us to an awkwardness in Weigel's position. The terrorist, he says, has no aims that can be taken seriously as political or moral. But this is a sweeping statement, instantly challengeable. The terrorist is objectively wicked, no dispute about that, in exercising the most appalling form of blackmail by menacing the lives of the innocent. Nothing should qualify this judgement. But this does not mean that the terrorist has no serious moral goals. It is possible to use unspeakably wicked means to pursue an aim that is shared by those who would not dream of acting in the same way, an aim that is intelligible or desirable. The risk in claiming so unproblematic a right to define what counts as politics and so to dismiss certain sorts of political calculation in combating terrorism is that the threatened state (the U.S. in this instance) loses the power of self-criticism and becomes trapped in a self-referential morality which creates even deeper difficulties in the application of just war theory.

I noted earlier the need for a ruler or government to be exposed to assessment by larger standards of the human good than national interest. Weigel is clear that the U.S. is de facto the only power capable of taking the lead in the struggle for world order, and he is skeptical of an international tribunal in which "the interests of the French foreign ministry and the strategic aims of the repressive Chinese government" dictate the determinations of the Security Council. The point is not without substance; but who is to adjudicate the interests of the U.S. government and its strategic aims, which cannot automatically be assumed to be identical with the detached promotion of "world order"?

This is by no means an anti-American argument, as the same could be said about any specific government assuming the identity of its interests with "world order." Weigel is unconvinced that any kind of international consensus is imperative for just war theory to be applicable to a U.S. intervention against rogue states or terrorist networks. But, granting the weakness of international legal institutions and the practical difficulties entailed in activating them credibly, it is important to allow that no government can simply be a judge in its own case in this respect. Indeed, this issue takes us back to one of the absolute fundamentals of just war theory:

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violence is not be undertaken by private persons. If a state or administration acts without due and visible attention to agreed international process, it acts in a way analogous to a private person.

The private person has redress in a higher court; do states? Aquinas and later just war theorists were writing in a context where what we understand as international legal structures did not exist (outside the Church, whose standing in such matters was a matter of complex dispute in the Middle Ages). There is a principle which allows the lower jurisdiction to act if the higher is absent or negligent. Does this apply in the modern context? I do not seek to settle these questions here, only to note that their significance for restating anything like a just war theory seems to be underrated by Weigel. Even if the international structures do not exist or lack credibility, the challenge remains as to how any one nation can express its accountability to the substantial concerns of international law.

As to the appropriate structures for this in the middle- to long-term, that too is a question I cannot seek to settle here. But if I may make a suggestion which I have outlined elsewhere, there is surely a case for a Standing Commission on Security within the UN structure, incorporating legal and other professionals, capable of taking expert evidence, which could advise on these questions and recommend UN intervention where necessary—instead of complete reliance on the present Security Council framework, which suffers from all the problems Weigel and others have identified. This is one way of recognizing that in the present world of global economic interdependence, colonial and postcolonial relationships, instant communications, and so forth, it is more essential than ever to have institutions that express and activate some commitment to a common good that is not nationally defined. A significant part of what I have been arguing is that the just war tradition in fact demands this kind of internationalism, in the sense that it makes a strong challenge to violence as the tool of private interest or private redress; and "privacy" of this kind is most definitely something that can be ascribed to states as well as individuals.

Weigel concludes his argument by appealing for a recognition of where just war theory should fit into the processes of democratic decision making. He rightly says that it represents an ethic designed to serve statesmen; but then he proposes a really startling theological novelty. He writes that "a charism of political discernment is unique to the vocation of public service," and he claims that this is a gift denied to church leaders and other religious spokespersons, so that a measure of modesty is appropriate in such persons when they participate in public argument.

This is related to, though not identical with, the more prosaic point that religious leaders don't know what governments know and therefore have no privileged extra information that would enable them to make more morally secure judgments than their rulers. But this requires further thought. First of all, there is no such thing in moral theology as a "charism of political discernment." A charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed for the building up of the Body of Christ, and wisdom is undoubtedly a gift of the Holy Spirit. But there is no charism that goes automatically with political leadership. A political leader may or may not be open to the gifts of the Spirit; democracy itself assumes, though, that the professed wisdom of any leader or any party is challengeable.

What we can properly expect in political leaders is not charism but virtue—the virtue of political prudence, which involves, once again, understanding what means are appropriate to agreed ends. Like all virtues, this one requires good habits that are formed by appropriate teaching and learning and that do not simply reach a plateau of excellence but need daily renewal and exercise. Of course governments know things that citizens don't (it would be a bit worrying if they didn't); but it needs to be said, with appropriate modesty, that others know things that the government sometimes does not. Lawyers, NGOs, linguists, anthropologists, religious communities, journalists, strategists, military and diplomatic historians—all know some things that may not instantly appear on the radar screen of any government, and the democratic process is about making sure that government hears what it may not know. This is not a claim to superior expertise overall, but simply to a voice in the debate and a freedom to exercise discernment on the basis of what is publicly available for judgment. Any appeal to universally superior knowledge, let alone some sort of charism of office, risks preempting real political or, indeed, theological debate in this area.

In the end, my unease with Weigel's otherwise welcome and excellent essay is that it encourages a weakening of the freedom of moral theology to sustain the self-critical habit in a nation and its political classes. By sidestepping the subtleties of the analysis of violence in the traditional theory it ends by leaving the solitary nation-state battling terror or aggression morally exposed to an uncomfortable degree; and it attempts to avoid this problem by appealing to a not-very-plausible theological innovation in the shape of the "charism of responsibility." If the just war theory is to be properly reconsidered—not as a checklist of moral

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requirements but as part of a wide-ranging theory of political good and political coercion—it needs to be replanted in a greater depth of soil. And it needs to see itself, as Weigel correctly says, as part of a protracted argument about statecraft. In that argument, many voices have a proper place, more at times than governments might find comfortable.

ROWAN WILLIAMS *is the Archbishop of Canterbury. The original version of this article was delivered as a lecture to the Royal Institute for International Affairs.*

George Weigel

Rowan Williams' lecture makes abundantly clear that a formidable theological intelligence is now resident at Lambeth Palace. That is a development of prime importance in refining the public moral debate in this time of war, and I welcome it wholeheartedly. I am also grateful to the Archbishop for identifying the significant points of agreement between us—although, as I hope to demonstrate, I have a rather different reading of the implications of several of those agreements.

In order to foster the further clarification of thought for which Dr. Williams calls, let me begin with some context-setting. In writing "Moral Clarity in a Time of War," my first intention was not to promote a reading of the just war tradition that would provide a secure moral rationale for preemptive U.S.-led military action against the regime of Saddam Hussein, similar outlaw states, or international terrorism; it was to propose a revitalization of the just war way of thinking as the basis of morally serious statecraft in the Western democracies in the circumstances of a post–September 11 world. To be sure, Iraq was an urgent test case for the just war tradition in this new and dangerous situation; and it is no secret that, in my judgment, a just war case for military action against the Saddam Hussein regime could be mounted. Still, I trust that my essay did not put the policy cart before the theological horse.

For the essay's first purpose was to address a grave theological and ecclesial problem: over more than a quarter century, religious intellectuals and pastoral leaders had distorted, and were continuing to distort, the just war tradition by disengaging it from its proper context within a theory of statecraft. And it seemed to me that the only way to bring the tools of moral reasoning to bear on the distinctive circumstances of this particular time of war, this post–September 11 world, was to restore just war thinking to its proper location within Christian moral reflection on the distinctive ends of public life. Thus I take it as a very good sign for the future of the discussion that Dr. Williams agrees with me on four crucial points: that the just war tradition is not a free-floating casuistry of means tests; that just war thinking must function within a normative understanding of the political task; that, in this very specific sense, "war" is a moral category—it is the use of proportionate and discriminate armed force for public ends by publicly accountable public authorities who have a moral obligation to defend those for whom they have assumed responsibility; and that "war" (*bellum*) must be rigorously distinguished from brigandage, piracy, terrorism, and other forms of *duellum*, the use of armed force by private persons for private ends.

These points of agreement bring us to the first significant disagreement—one that involves the starting point for just war reflection. Does the just war way of thinking begin with a "presumption against war," or does it begin elsewhere?

This entire discussion has been confused by the tendency of "presumption against war" proponents to fudge the language, so that in some instances we are told that the tradition begins with a presumption against war, whereas on other occasions the tradition is said to begin with a presumption against violence. While I quoted both these formulations in "Moral Clarity," the real issue is the so-called presumption against war, as the *terminus a quo* for just war thinking. Thus the Archbishop's interesting observations on the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of "violence" do not quite get us to the heart of the argument.

In thinking about these matters, I rely on the historical research of James Turner Johnson, who insists that there is simply no warrant in the tradition—in its Augustinian, medieval, or early modern forms—for starting just war thinking with a presumption against war. Rather, as I wrote with emphasis in my essay, the tradition "*begins somewhere else*." If the just war tradition is theologically and historically embedded within a more comprehensive theory of statecraft—a theory which stresses the prior obligation of public authority to advance and defend the peace of right order (*tranquillitas ordinis*), which is composed of freedom, justice, and security—then just war thinking "begins" not with presumptions for or against war but with a context-setting moral judgment about the obligation of public authority to pursue the peace of right order—which includes the obligation of providing for the security of one's people against aggression. That, and nothing other than that, is the "starting point" for just war thinking. Questions of

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how—can the peace of right order be defended and advanced through nonmilitary means, or must proportionate and discriminate armed force be deployed?—come into focus only when the what and the why of morally defensible political ends have been established. Dr. Williams' reference to Aquinas' discussion of just war in the *Summa* demonstrates this (even as it undermines his historically and theologically questionable claim that Aquinas, too, shares the presumption against war). Why can a sovereign ruler override what Dr. Williams calls Aquinas' "prima facie case against war"? Because, I suggest, the ruler is under a prior moral obligation, a responsibility to defend the peace of right order. That prior obligation is the beginning of all morally serious thinking about the use of armed force for morally serious ends.

Thus just war thinking, in Aquinas and elsewhere, has to be located within a given theologian's more comprehensive understanding of the normative character of statecraft, its ends, and the means appropriate to securing those ends—a point I could have made clearer in my essay.

What does this have to do with today's arguments? A lot, actually. For the net result of the presumption against war has not been to reinforce the obvious—namely, that public authority has to make a moral case that the use of armed force in defending the peace of right order is the only responsible option in this instance, because other nonmilitary means have failed or have been reasonably judged to be unavailing, given the threat and the aggressor. Rather, the presumption against war has smuggled into the just war discussion a pacifist premise—armed force is wicked—that classic just war thinking rejects. As I suggested in "Moral Clarity," the classic just war tradition does not regard armed force as inherently suspect morally; rather, classic just war thinking treats armed force as an instrument that can be used for good or for evil, depending on who is using it, for what ends, and how.

That smuggled pacifist premise has made a hash of theological method, inverting the tradition by putting *ius in bello* questions ahead of the determinations that give those questions moral sense—the determinations of the *ius ad bellum*. It has also distorted the prudential judgments of many religious leaders as they have tried to read the signs of the times through the filter of the presumption against war. Time and again in recent years religious leaders have been proven wrong in their predictions about the likely consequences of various uses of armed force. There is certainly an ideological element to these failures of prognostication, as more and more of the world's established Christian leadership has adopted, from the international left, a functional pacifism whose primary objection to the use of armed force has to do with who is using it—that is, the West, understood as an oppressor culture. But ideological predispositions don't explain every facet of this global clerical lurch *à gauche*; something else is also going on here. And that something else is, I think, the presumption against war, which functions like a badly manufactured pair of eyeglasses, distorting the vision of the observer. To return, once again, to the most obvious example of this artificial myopia: in their 1983 pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace," the Catholic bishops of the United States seriously misread the moral and political dynamics of the last decade of the Cold War (insisting that nuclear arms control was the key to peace, not regime change in the Soviet Union and its satellites), not because the (complex) facts of the case were not there to be seen and understood, but because the presumption against war blurred their perception of what they were seeing. The same, I suggest, holds true for the many warnings of catastrophe from religious leaders that preceded the Gulf War of 1991 and the most recent Iraq War.

Dr. Williams once jocularly referred to himself as a "hairy lefty," and while his article here rises far above the standards of analysis and judgment typically found in religious activist circles, there are several points in his essay at which, I respectfully suggest, portside-tilting politics are getting the better of empirically informed theological analysis.

The first of these has to do with terrorism and outlaw states. The Archbishop's claim that today's terror networks are motivated by some form of political rationality is, at the very least, misleading, for it seems to ignore the powerful currents of nihilism at work in the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other contemporary terrorist organizations and networks. Anarchic nihilism has been a prominent feature of modern terrorism since its origins in nineteenth-century Russia. When that form of nihilism is married to a distorted conception of monotheism, it yields a goal that I am sure Dr. Williams rejects on moral grounds (i.e., the coercive imposition of politicized Islam on a national and international scale) and a method—mass murder—that he rightly deplores. As for outlaw states, it would strain credulity to suggest that Kim Jong Il's aims for North Korea are either "intelligible" or "desirable," so I cannot imagine that the Archbishop's (entirely appropriate) counsel to be careful in defining "what counts as politics" applies here. Moreover, to deny that a rogue state or terrorist organization lacks morally defensible

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goals is not to conclude, without further analytic ado, that military action is the most appropriate means for dealing with the threat posed by, say, North Korea. As classic just war thinking would affirm, there is no one-size-fits-all strategic prescription for dealing with the world's madmen.

The Archbishop is right to caution against nations acting as judges in their own cases. But is that really what happened in the U.S. government's decision making prior to the recent Iraq War? The U.S.-led action in Iraq was supported by allies, most notably the government of Dr. Williams' own country. After strenuous efforts to secure Security Council approval for the use of armed force to vindicate Security Council resolutions, the Bush administration, its judgment confirmed by the governments involved in a coalition of the willing, did not decide to act as its own judge; it decided, again with allies, that some of the judges in this instance—in particular, France, Germany, and Russia—could not be taken seriously as moral or political arbiters of the case in question. The administration's judgment, supported by Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Poland, Australia, and others, was not unilateralist; and that judgment was reached after vigorous public and governmental debate within the states involved in the U.S.-led coalition. For that reason (and many others), the suggestion that the United States government was acting, in the case of Saddam Hussein's regime, as a "private person" strikes me as unpersuasive.

The Archbishop is quite right in arguing that the just war tradition demands a form of internationalism. The question for prudential judgment is whether the current UN system is in fact a form of internationalism that commands moral respect. Dr. Williams and I are quite agreed that the UN is in need of serious reform. The difference between us seems to involve a disagreement about whether the present UN is in fact a political and moral entity independent of states and a genuinely disinterested internationalist force in world politics. In my view, the recent debacle in the Security Council with respect to Iraq demonstrates that, in dealing with international security issues, today's UN is entirely the tool of states, many of the most important of which—again, France, Germany, and Russia—are certainly not making their policy calculations on genuinely internationalist grounds, or on grounds of moral reason rightly understood. Perhaps this could change; but until it does, the moral obligations of national leaders will remain what they have always been.

This fact of life leads to the important question of the international accountability of a powerful country such as the United States. Serious moral reasoning about that question does not begin by assuming that the present UN system is the only, or perhaps even the primary, locus for measuring that accountability. The development of morally and politically worthy international institutions of conflict resolution—which is demanded both by the just war tradition (as the Archbishop suggests) and by Catholic social doctrine from Pius XII through John Paul II—must begin with a frank assessment of the corruptions of the present UN system, not with the assumption that the UN has achieved any sort of monopoly on the moral legitimation of the use of armed force in defense of the peace of right order.

I gladly accept Dr. Williams' proposal that "virtue" (with specific reference to the virtue of prudence) is the apt word for getting at the distinctive habitus to be desired in public authorities, while assuring him that, in using "charism," I was not suggesting that the presidential oath of office (or its British parliamentary equivalent) involves an infusion of any particular gift of the Holy Spirit. And we are quite agreed that public authorities ought to consult widely in developing their own moral clarity in this time of war. It is certainly true that those outside the halls of power can sometimes see things that those inside have difficulty discerning. From my own experience with the present U.S. administration, I can say with some assurance that this point is well understood in the White House, the National Security Council, and the Department of Defense.

These things happen differently in the United States than in Great Britain, where the policy debate (at least as I observe it) is conducted within far more confined circles; the Archbishop rightly cautions against drawing that circle of consultation too narrowly. By the same token, as a distinguished theologian, he surely agrees that public authorities will be more willing to learn from theology's distinctive perspective on national and international security issues when theologians and clergymen demonstrate that their perceptions are informed by a clear view of the just war tradition as part of a responsible Christian theory of statecraft.

Having written early and at length that a revolution of conscience preceded and made possible the Revolution of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, I am not unaware of the imperative of sustaining what Dr. Williams nicely describes as "the freedom of moral theology to sustain the self-critical habit in a nation and its political classes." Perhaps the aforementioned difference between the United States and Great Britain as political cultures leads me to be somewhat less concerned about the possibility of a weakening of theology's critical voice in the foreign policy debates

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of the early twenty-first century. My confidence that the debate will continue to be morally informed here in America may also have something to do with the relative culture-forming capacities of Christian communities here and in Britain. (It would be interesting, for example, to learn if the just war tradition is as alive in the British defense and military establishment, or at Sandhurst and Dartmouth, as it is in the American officer corps, and at West Point and Annapolis.)

In any event, and to return to the beginning, I take Dr. Williams' lecture—and our basic agreement on the intrinsic relationship of the just war tradition to a morally informed Christian theory of statecraft—as a hopeful sign that what I termed the "forgetting" of the just war tradition may be remedied by the kind of forthright, critical, and ecumenical conversation to which the Archbishop and I are both committed.

George Weigel *is Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.*

Flotsam on a Winter Tide

Round again on the full tide, churning
close to the quiet foreshore, then
caught by the undertow and turning
round again—

slowing now: as far-traveled men,
turning back with regret or yearning,
drift for a while near journey's end.

Knowing all and beyond all knowing,
Nature speaks at the tide's turn, when
all that drifts is gathered, going
round again.

David Anthony

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The Bard, the Black, the Jew

R. V. Young

More than any other writer, Shakespeare embodies the distinctive principles of Western Civilization. Men and women of the West are drawn to Shakespeare because his plays and poems continue to express their aspirations, to articulate their concerns, and to confront the tensions and contradictions in the Western vision itself. He is admired not as an uncritical encomiast of his own culture and society, but rather as an exemplum of the spirit—both critical and conservative—that is among the West's most enduring legacies to the world. It is, therefore, no surprise that academic literary critics, who owe their very existence to Shakespeare and other great writers, have cast doubt upon Shakespeare's exalted position at exactly the moment in history when the societies of the West have become most anxious about their own integrity and probity.

No issue has proven more vexatious than race in the assessment of the moral stature of Western Civilization. The drive toward multiculturalism, which is especially vigorous in the academic world, rests on the proposition that the culture of the West, in virtually all its manifestations, is an elite hegemony of white European males, which routinely marginalizes, represses, and generally victimizes women, the poor, adherents to non-Christian religions, and—above all—the dark-skinned races indigenous to other continents. While the chief playwright of the Western world is, according to this view, fully implicated in the crimes of his culture, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, plays that offer characters and incidents with a plausible relation to contemporary concerns, undermine any such judgment. Both plays unsettle assumptions and disturb the conscience—these are among the effects of great works of art, which are strengthened by the inquiring spirit of Western Civilization. Nevertheless, the disturbance arises from an essentially Christian vision of human nature and the human condition that, while affirming their reconciliation in God, acknowledges the tension between justice and mercy in this world.

The Merchant of Venice can be an extremely troubling play for contemporary audiences. While commentators of an earlier generation sought to save Shakespeare and the Christian characters from the charge of intolerance and anti-Semitism by turning the play into an allegory, more recent readings often maintain, to the contrary, that Shakespeare in fact lays the groundwork for the racialist anti-Semitism of a later era in the character of Shylock. Now *The Merchant of Venice*, although it involves significant symbolic elements, is not an allegory; and although it has certainly had an impact on European culture, the play has not—among reasonable persons—contributed to the rise of anti-Semitism. Such provocation for anti-Semitism as it provides has been there in the culture all along, and the principal effect of *The Merchant of Venice* is to disrupt any ideological complacency deriving from the apparent Jewish stereotype presented by Shylock. This disruption does not entail Shylock's romantic transmogrification into a tragic hero; in fact, it is his stubborn villainy that generates the uneasy tension that runs through the drama. Shylock is certainly a more malicious individual than Antonio, Bassanio, or Portia, yet there can be no question that the Jew suffers ill use at the

R. V. Young *is Professor of English at North Carolina State University. His most recent books are* Doctrine & Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry *(Boydell & Brewer, 2000) and* A Student's Guide to Literature *(ISI, 2000).*

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hands of the Christians. Shakespeare's critical spirit is nowhere more manifest: in literature as in life, the individual whom we find pleasant or engaging is not always good, not always fair; and justice is not always served by just any action taken against a malefactor. It is precisely because Shylock is so cruel and repellent that his appeal to our common humanity is so poignant.

Regarded as a depiction of a Jew, *The Merchant of Venice* stands out because there is nothing else like it. Villainous Jews are not unusual in medieval literature. Indeed, Jews who compel our attention as suffering human beings are virtually unheard of before Shakespeare. It is generally agreed that Shakespeare takes most of the plot from the tale of Giannetto, which appears in a fourteenth-century Italian collection, *Il Pecorone* (the "blockhead" or "dolt"). Shakespeare adds depth of meaning and richness of texture to every element of plot and character that he has imitated, but especially in his creation of Shylock, who is a nameless, dimensionless figure in *Il Pecorone*. Shakespeare not only provides the Jewish usurer with a name, but also with a daughter who elopes with a Christian, as well as with a history of hostility and abuse from the Christian merchant Antonio. Above all, Shakespeare gives Shylock an intense bitterness and sense of humiliation that certainly explain—although they do not excuse—his murderous intentions toward Antonio.

To be sure, Shakespeare had in Christopher Marlowe a more formidable competitor in the dramatization of a villainous Jew than the anonymous compiler of *Il Pecorone*. Still, in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas is a caricature out of medieval mystery and miracle plays. He gives an account of himself in close accord with the superstitious folk image of the Jew as ritual murderer, poisoner, and ruthless enemy of humanity—but especially of Christians. "Be mov'd at nothing," he urges his servant, "see thou pity none, / But to thyself smile when the Christians moan." To this image of mythical terror out of the Middle Ages Marlowe adds a very "modern" Elizabethan fear of the amoral Machiavellian schemer—"Machavill" speaks the prologue to the play and claims Barabas as his follower. The title character of *The Jew of Malta* is thus an Elizabethan archetype of villainy.

When *The Merchant of Venice* was first performed, probably in 1596 or 1597, *The Jew of Malta* had enjoyed an extraordinarily successful revival, having been staged at least thirty-six times between February 1592 and June 1596. What may have kept interest in the subject alive and even provided an occasion for the composition of Shakespeare's play was the notorious affair of Roderigo Lopez, a Portuguese Jew who had served as physician to Queen Elizabeth. Jews had been officially banished from England in 1290 by King Edward I, and Lopez, like the rest of the handful of Jews living in London in the sixteenth century, was at least nominally a Christian convert. Such conversions were, however, always suspect among Christians throughout Europe, and when Lopez became implicated in an alleged Spanish plot to poison the Queen in 1594, old fears of Jewish duplicity and cruelty were seemingly confirmed.

The trial and execution for treason of Roderigo Lopez thus furnished a sensational backdrop for *The Merchant of Venice*. But in sharp contrast to the model he had in *The Jew of Malta*, Shakespeare mutes the sensational possibilities in the material. Both Barabas and Shylock have only daughters who, their fathers feel, betray them by becoming Christians. Abigail, the daughter of Barabas, having counterfeited a religious vocation in order to help her father recover his money, eventually becomes a nun. Barabas responds by poisoning her, along with all the nuns in the convent. Shylock's daughter Jessica, unhappy at home, elopes with a prodigal Christian, Lorenzo, and steals money and jewels from her father. Shylock is enraged at the loss of his ducats, but he is also heartbroken over his daughter's heartless betrayal of him. He cries out in his rage and frustration, "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!" The discrepancy between Barabas' atrocity and Shylock's malevolent but perfectly understandable human exclamation could hardly be more pronounced. The one is a monster, the other a man.

From the outset Shakespeare sets about providing Shylock with powerful motivation for his hatred of Antonio. When Antonio offers Shylock surety for a loan of 3,000 ducats to the improvident Bassanio, the aggrieved moneylender reminds the merchant that he has called the Jew "misbeliever, cut-throat dog" along with a host of other insults. "Hath a dog money?" Shylock asks, "Is it possible / A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Antonio is unmoved by Shylock's indignant response to such humiliations and tells him to lend the money "to thine enemy, / Who if he break, thou mayst with better face / Exact the penalty." Antonio is, in modern parlance, asking for it, and we may suspect that a modern playwright with this plot on his hands would make the long-suffering Jew first conceive his hatred here, when his genuine longing for reconciliation is rebuffed one time too many. Shakespeare, however, has already let us know, in an aside earlier in the scene, that Shylock hates Antonio

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because "he is a Christian" and because "He lends out money gratis, and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice."

But Shylock's studied malice no more justifies Antonio's self-righteous complacency than Antonio's insults justify Shylock's premeditation of murder. In fact, the Christian merchant is more of a Pharisee in his self-assured moral and spiritual superiority than is the Jewish usurer, and this ironic tension adds bite to the gaiety of this romantic comedy. Antonio's acceptance of the "merry bond" of a pound of his flesh to be granted Shylock in the unlikely event of forfeiture allows Antonio to avoid entering an agreement involving interest, to which he was willing to agree "only to supply the ripe wants of my friend." It is important to note that Antonio's complete condemnation of any taking of interest is an extreme view for Elizabethan England during Shakespeare's time. Although usury was theoretically forbidden, in practice it was allowed at rates of no more than ten percent per annum. Francis Bacon probably expresses the common attitude in his 1625 essay "Of Usury," where he maintains that lending at a profit is so necessary that "to speake of the Abolishing of Usury is Idle. All States have ever had it, in one Kinde or Rate, or other. So as that Opinion must be sent to *Utopia*."

What turns Shylock from a petty, circumspect miser into a ruthless avenger is his daughter's elopement. It is this betrayal by his own flesh and blood, and the jeering of the minor Christian characters Solanio and Salerio, that render Shylock implacable, not the mythical Jewish bloodlust of medieval fantasy. Salerio and Solanio do not, at first, take Shylock seriously; they cannot believe that he will go through with his threat. Shylock, for his part, has indeed become remorseless in his murderous intention toward Antonio, but it is strictly a matter of personal hatred growing out of a sense of wounded pride. If the Christian Venetians would only look at him with unbiased eyes, they would see that he acts with a human, perfectly understandable motive.

In a masterstroke of irony, Shakespeare has Shylock claim his common humanity most poignantly in the course of justifying his most inhuman act. In one of the play's two most famous speeches, Shylock berates the Christians for failing to acknowledge his equally human status even as he is bent upon shedding it: "Hath not a Jew eyes?" he cries. "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions . . . ?" He is like them in his faculties, he maintains, and the moral corollary follows inevitably: "And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" It is significant that Shylock makes his plea on a very basic level, and that he is not a very good man himself. A man ought not to be required to appeal to others on an exalted spiritual plane in order to have his fundamental humanity acknowledged. Essential human dignity should not be contingent upon a winsome personality.

Hence the trial scene in Act IV, which so unsettles modern audiences, manifests not the failure of Shakespeare's art, but rather its triumph. In fact, the success is a direct result of the tremendous tension it generates in readers and theatergoers. While it is a mistake to attempt to save the play's gaiety and romance by turning its turbid religious conflict into an abstract allegory in which the feelings and experiences of the individual characters do not count for much, an equal error is made by critics who diminish or dismiss the importance of religion for the Christian characters. The trial scene is constructed from a Christian perspective, which highlights the Pauline dichotomy of Old Testament legalism opposed to the New Testament gospel of grace. Before Portia, disguised as Balthasar, enters the scene the issue is framed in an exchange between the Duke and Shylock. "How shalt thou hope for mercy," asks the former, "rend'ring none?" To which the Jew replies, "What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?" Shylock is persistent in his demand that the legal contract be carried out exactly as it is written, confident in the justice of his cause: "My deeds upon my head! I crave the law, / The penalty and forfeit of my bond."

Having uttered one of the most moving speeches in all of Shakespeare's plays, he is deaf to another, Portia's "quality of mercy" speech, which closes with a reminder of universal human fallibility: "Therefore, Jew, / Though justice be thy plea, consider this, / That in the course of justice, none of us / Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy, / And that same prayer doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy." Some critics are skeptical about the sincerity (or at least the depth) of Portia's Christianity, because they see little that is specifically Christian in her plea to Shylock—clemency was, of course, an important Stoic theme. But in fact the prayer that "doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy" is the "Our Father," and the notion that we cannot be saved by our own justice is the heart of the gospel, especially as preached by St. Paul. The opposition between the covenants of law and grace, which comes to the fore in the trial scene, is central to the play as whole, and there is no reason to presume that this understanding of moral and spiritual reality is not integral to the minds of Shakespeare's Venetian Christians.

Even so, these are not fervent or exemplary Christians. Fervent, exemplary Christians are called *saints*, and their number is regrettably small. As is so often

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the case in Shakespeare, the irony is doubled: Shylock gives utterance to an impassioned plea for the common humanity in all men even as he is hardening his heart to exact a terrible vengeance; Portia eloquently extols the virtue of mercy in the hearts of kings and seems promptly to forget her own speech when she comes to exercise power herself. The Duke, Bassanio, and Antonio—once the threat is past—are all willing to allow a chagrined Shylock to walk away with his money; it is the iron-willed Portia who demands that he be held to the strict letter of the law, just as he himself has insisted. The end of the play would be much more comfortable for us if we could treat the Portia of the trial scene as an allegory of the Divine Judge who forces Shylock (the allegorical sinner) to relinquish all his wealth with the conditional restoration of a part of it upon his baptism—that is, he must throw down everything he has and follow Christ. But this will not work because we already know Portia as the high-spirited, self-possessed mistress of Belmont and also as a tender, longing young bride. She has no business playing God.

Here again is Shakespeare's critical spirit at work: Portia provides a fine account of mankind's universal need for the grace of forgiveness but then fails to be gracious and forgiving herself. Even she, "a Daniel come to judgment," is fallible and in need of forgiveness. If we miss the point, Shakespeare underscores it with a further irony. The character who immediately begins jeering at Shylock when Portia turns the tables on him, the character who offers Shylock only "A halter *gratis*—nothing else *for God's sake*" (emphasis added), is named *Gratiano*, which of course suggests *grazia*, the Italian word for "grace." The character contradicts the name, and this is the man who most avidly seconds Portia in her complete humiliation of Shylock, though the others join in readily enough. The Christian principle of gracious forgiveness is, then, a good one, but it is extremely difficult for Christians themselves to observe it. Shylock is prevented from cutting away a pound of Antonio's flesh from very near his heart, but in a sense the Christians cut Shylock's heart out of his body without shedding a drop of his blood. And they do so with clear—if blinded—consciences. In thus dramatizing the doctrine of grace by showing how those who profess it often fail to fulfill it, Shakespeare highlights a distinctive and specifically Christian element of Western Civilization: its inability to live up to its own finest insights, which are always too exalted to be grasped by mortal men and women.

The devastated Shylock slinking off the stage casts a shadow over the comedy and romance of *The Merchant of Venice*, but we cannot suppose this effect to be inadvertent on Shakespeare's part, because he does the same thing in other plays. Falstaff certainly ought to be banished from the royal court at the end of *II Henry IV*, but his dismissal still disrupts the solemnity of the coronation. Even more striking is the storming off the stage of the "much abus'd" Malvolio at the end of *Twelfth Night*. As his name indicates, Malvolio is a man of ill will. His genuine grievance against Olivia's other servants, however, dampens the gaiety of the play's conclusion. Moreover, the parallel with Malvolio assimilates Shylock to another category: in *Twelfth Night* Maria calls Malvolio "a kind of Puritan." Shakespeare's audience, which would have had little chance to associate with Jews, would have found Shylock's disapproval of plays and revelry familiar enough: "What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica: / Lock up my doors, ... / Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter / My sober house." Everything in Shakespeare's plays—not to mention his profession as playwright—suggests that he was not fond of Puritans. Yet as a man who was surely reared a Catholic and who may have died a Catholic in the ferociously anti-Catholic England of Elizabeth and James, he may well have sympathized with anyone under the pressure of religious conformity. This fact may well explain the poignancy of Shylock's forced conversion, troubling the penultimate act of this comedy. Shylock is thwarted, but we cannot forget him and his demand to be recognized as a man, not a monster.

In *Othello* Shakespeare develops the ambiguous status of the dark-skinned African in Renaissance European society. As in *The Merchant of Venice*, religious issues complicate considerations of race and ethnicity, but Shakespeare's drama again leaves an attentive audience or reader with a powerful realization of the essential humanity of the racial "other." *Othello* is not, then, an expression of an established racism; rather, it highlights the danger of racial categorization at a point in European history when it was soon to become a problem. The danger is apparent in several disdainful references to Othello's black skin, African features, and general foreignness; these are mingled with brutish sexual images after Othello, the hired commander of Venice's military forces, has secretly won the hand of a prominent senator's beautiful daughter. "What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe," exclaims Roderigo, a rejected suitor, "If he can carry't thus!" Iago rouses the father, Brabantio, by shouting under his window, "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe," and soon adds, "I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs." When Brabantio first con-

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fronts Othello, he denies that his daughter without magical compulsion "Would ever have, t' incur a general mock, / Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou."

In the face of such scurrility, the dignity and calm of Othello emerge with great force when he takes the stage in the second scene. More than any other Shakespearean tragic hero, he commands respect and radiates authority as the drama begins, and also embodies the values of aristocratic chivalry. Iago attempts to ruffle the Moor's magnificent self-possession to no avail. "You were best go in," Iago warns, when he thinks that Brabantio and his retainers approach. "Not I; I must be found," Othello tranquilly replies. "My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly." He is supremely confident in his virtues, his standing in the city, and his clear conscience. When the outraged father's party does finally confront Othello and the officers who have come to summon him to the Duke's council chamber "upon some present business of the state," and the blades of drawn weapons are gleaming in the torchlight, the Moorish general quells the threatened tumult with a relaxed yet magisterial authority: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them." Only a man accustomed to being obeyed could utter these words with such self-assurance. After the vile slanders of Iago and Roderigo, who would paint Othello as a lecherous savage in the play's first scene, Shakespeare is at pains to present the Moor as a gentleman of fully heroic stature.

Othello's stature is confirmed when the Duke and his council consider Brabantio's accusation that his daughter "is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted / By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks." Othello gives an account of wooing Desdemona by means of the stories he told of perilous adventure and suffering in exotic lands: "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, / And I lov'd her that she did pity them. / This only is the witchcraft I have us'd." The Duke himself affirms Othello's conclusion: "I think this tale would win my daughter too." For her part, Desdemona dispels the aspersions cast upon her bridegroom's appearance and supposed barbarism with an exemplary assertion of the spiritual transcendence of human dignity: "I saw Othello's visage in his mind, / And to his honors and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate."

When we consider the racial or ethnic dynamics of the play, two points stand out: First, racial difference is a source of animosity, suspicion, and disdain; second, despite the animosity, suspicion, and disdain, not even Shakespeare's fictionalized Venice can be described as a racist society in the modern sense of the term. Brabantio's denigrations are the response of a man who has lost a daughter on whom he doted to a foreigner who was welcome as a guest but not as a son-in-law. Roderigo, who refers to Othello as "the thick-lips," is apparently a wastrel whom both Desdemona and Brabantio have scorned as a suitor. And then there is Iago, who is an officer on Othello's staff. Surely he is the most wicked of Shakespeare's villains, a man who seems to delight in evil for its own sake to such an extent that he inspired Coleridge to his famous phrase, "the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity." Over against the malicious slanders of these men is the nearly universal admiration for Othello. Plainly, the Duke and Venetian senators regard him as their best general and only hope against a Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Even Iago is constrained to admit to Roderigo, "that, for their souls, / Another of his fadom they have none / To lead their business." Finally, and most important, there is the generic evidence: Othello is a tragic hero, and although a tragic hero necessarily has a flaw, he cannot be despicable or inferior. Tragedy, Aristotle observes in the *Poetics*, is "a representation of men better than ourselves."

The significance of Othello's status as a tragic hero may be easily gauged from a criticism of the play made by Thomas Rymer at the end of the seventeenth century. *Othello* was one of the more popular tragedies on the English stage throughout the century, and in 1693 Rymer complains that it "is said to bear the Bell away." He is quite evidently incensed at the changes Shakespeare has made in the source, a novella by Giraldo Cinthio, all of which serve to ennoble the characters and elevate the action: "He bestows a name on his *Moor*, and styles him the Moor of Venice—a Note of preeminence which neither History nor Heraldry can allow him. *Cinthio*, who knew him best, and whose creature he was, calls him simply a *Moor*."

Rymer will grant to a black African not even the "dignity" of a name, much less the nobility of a soldier or the grandeur of a heroic figure. He scornfully quotes a few lines of Othello's account of the "magical" wooing and remarks, "This was sufficient to make the Black-amoor White, and reconcile all, tho' there had been a Cloven-foot into the bargain"; and he is outraged that a white Venetian like Iago should be depicted as a conniving liar: "He is no Black-amoor Souldier, so we may be sure he should be like other Souldiers of our acquaintance."

Clearly something has happened that enables or impels white Englishmen (and other Europeans) in Rymer's time to regard black Africans as naturally inferior. When *Othello* was first performed in 1603

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or 1604, it was rare for slavery to be seen as an institution exclusively imposed by Europeans and Arabs upon black Africans, but this would soon change. Less than ninety years later, Thomas Rymer finds it intolerable for a noble black man to win the love of a noble white woman and marry her. The power of this viewpoint is displayed in the less-than-edifying spectacle of various critics in the course of the next two-and-a-half centuries attempting to make Othello merely swarthy or "tawny," and not a sub-Saharan African. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who ought to have known better, will serve as an example: "it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro." Coleridge is apparently unaware of how much he sounds like Brabantio.

Postmodern efforts to "save" the play—to make it "relevant" to contemporary audiences—are often equally unsatisfactory and substitute patronizing pity of Othello for Rymer's unvarnished contempt. Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), the foundational work of the New Historicism, reads Othello as a virtual allegory of the European conquest of the New World. Greenblatt maintains that the dominance of the "mobile society" of the modern West is characterized by a sinister "empathy" that enables a man to enter into the situation of another and beguile him. Iago, according to this view, is the embodiment of Western Civilization in its aggressive essence.

Now there are two major problems here, even if we only consider the play and not the implications of the schema as a definition of Western Civilization. First, there is the problem that Iago is the villain of the play and not its hero: far from looking like the complete Renaissance man, he resembles nothing so much as the unstable, decentered postmodern subject. "I am not what I am," he confides to Roderigo. Like so many of Shakespeare's tragic antagonists—think of Edmund in *King Lear*—Iago is best regarded as a threat to traditional Western Civilization, not as its exemplar. Second, the "empathetic" relationship that Greenblatt proposes between Iago and Othello reduces the latter to little more than a "noble savage"—precisely Iago's "erring barbarian" out of his depth in a marriage to a "super-subtle Venetian." Yet everything in the text of the play tells us that while Othello is certainly noble, he is not in the least savage. Greenblatt would make Othello's vulnerability to deception by Iago no different from Roderigo's, but Iago plays on the passions of the latter. It is just his nobility that makes Othello vulnerable, and in this he is very much like Hamlet. When Claudius is planning to have Laertes murder Hamlet with a poisoned foil in what is ostensibly a friendly fencing match, he tells Laertes that Hamlet, "Most generous, and free from all contriving, / Will not peruse the foils." In a soliloquy at the end of Act I of *Othello*, Iago informs the audience that Othello has a similarly ingenuous character: "The Moor is of a free and open nature, / That thinks men honest that but seem to be so."

But Greenblatt sees Othello as the victim of another aspect of Western Civilization, the tension between "erotic intensity" and "Christian orthodoxy." Othello's blackness becomes a symbol of the sexual guilt that torments a man who must be forever proving his claim to a place in society: "This tension is less a manifestation of some atavistic 'blackness' specific to Othello than a manifestation of the colonial power of Christian doctrine over sexuality, a power visible at this point precisely in its inherent limitation." Greenblatt's alarm about the "colonial power of Christian doctrine over sexuality" is based on Othello's response to Desdemona when she asks to accompany her new husband on the campaign in Cyprus; if she cannot, then "the rites for why I love him are bereft me." Othello certainly wants her company, but he is anxious lest the senators take the wrong impression from her impassioned plea: "Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not / To please the palate of my appetite, / But to be free and bounteous to her mind." Now the obvious interpretation of this passage would stress both Othello's interest in reassuring his employers that he will in no way "scant" their "great business" and his modesty in wishing to deflect any general speculation about the sexual ardor of the newlyweds.

For Greenblatt and other postmodern critics, however, this passage suggests that Othello is a sexual cripple captured by "a still darker aspect of Christian orthodoxy," which Greenblatt illustrates by quoting St. Jerome (out of context): "An adulterer is he who is too ardent a lover of his wife." Certainly the sexual standards of both Shakespeare's era and Jerome's were generally sterner than what we encounter at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but it is another question whether husbands ought to treat their wives as they would an adulteress. In any event, the postmodernist interpretation of Othello as a psychologically crippled victim of Christian sexual morality depends, again, upon making Iago the exemplar of Western Civilization. In this view, the man who is identified simply as a "Villaine" in the list of characters in the first folio edition defines the norms that govern the play. After Roderigo has witnessed the expressions of love that pass between Othello and Desdemona in the presence of the Duke and the sen-

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ators, he is ready to give up his hopes of ever possessing her; but Iago rekindles his ardor by assuring him that "love" is a mere illusion of carnal passion: "It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will." Postmodernist interpreters join Iago in scorning the protestations of Othello and Desdemona that their love is actually something more than mere sensual attraction, and only by this great negation can they deny that Othello, like all Shakespeare's tragic heroes, is the embodiment of a Western ideal who fails and suffers catastrophe.

Othello, like *The Merchant of Venice*, is both an affirmation of the principles of the Western world and a daring challenge to that civilization to embody its principles with more constancy. *The Merchant of Venice* sets a concept of justice tempered with mercy over against unbending legalism and self-righteousness, but it reminds us—in the troubling figure of Shylock as well as in the failure of the Christian characters to integrate him into the comic conclusion—that even expressions of mercy can be tainted with self-righteousness. The challenge is all the greater—and Shylock's eloquent denunciation of the way he has been dehumanized is all the more poignant—because he is in many ways such an unattractive individual. It is, after all, sinners who require grace. In still more daring fashion, *Othello* exemplifies the highest virtues of Western Christendom—fortitude, courtesy, devotion to duty, and sexual delicacy—in a character who seems, to some observers, their antithesis: a black African who could routinely be associated with Islam or with barbarism. Shakespeare thus reminds us that the essence of Western Civilization is a matter of the mind and the heart, not of outward appearance or blood inheritance. In Othello's tragic fall—a tragedy deepened by the loftiness of his nobility at the play's outset—we see the fragility of virtue and honor, especially their vulnerability to betrayal by those, like Iago, who seem to be their champions. Anti-Semitism and racial prejudice against black Africans are two of the uglier maladies in the history of the West, but in the work of its greatest dramatist we see that these evils are not integral to its civilization, and that in the West's critical spirit lie the means of its continual reform. FT

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Publick Religion: Adams v. Jefferson

John Witte, Jr.

The civic catechisms of our day still celebrate Thomas Jefferson's experiment in religious liberty. To end a millennium of repressive religious establishments, we are taught, Jefferson sought liberty in the twin formulas of privatizing religion and secularizing politics. Religion must be "a concern purely between our God and our consciences," he wrote. Politics must be conducted with "a wall of separation between church and state." "Publick Religion" is a threat to private religion, and must thus be discouraged. "Political ministry" is a menace to political integrity and must thus be outlawed.

These Jeffersonian maxims remain for many today the cardinal axioms of a unique American logic of religious freedom to which every patriotic individual and institution should subscribe. All public school students learn the virtues of keeping their Bibles at home and their prayers in the closet. Every church knows the tax law advantages of high cultural conformity and low political temperature. Every politician understands the calculus of courting religious favors without subvening religious causes. Religious privatization is the bargain we must strike to attain religious freedom for all. A wall of separation is the barrier we must build to contain religious bigotry for good. If only those right-wing killjoys of our day would learn proper patriotism, instead of pestering us with their Commandments and faith-based initiatives!

"A page of history is worth a volume of logic," Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said. And careful historical work in the past two decades has begun to call a good deal of this popular Jeffersonian logic into question. Not only were Jefferson's views on disestablishment and free exercise considerably more delphic than was once imagined, but the fuller account now available of the genesis and exodus of the American experiment in religious liberty suggests that Jefferson's views were hardly conventional in his own day or in the century to follow. Indeed, the Jeffersonian model of religious liberty came to constitutional prominence only in the 1940s, and then largely at the behest of the United States Supreme Court. During much of the time before that, the American experiment was devoted not so much to privatizing religion and to secularizing politics as to balancing the freedoms of all private religions against the establishment of one public religion.

The implications of these new historical insights have only begun to be worked out. The hard right has woven them into a crusade to reclaim the nation's Christian roots and to reestablish its Christian traditions in place of the establishment of secularism that they now see. The hard left has converted them into a new appreciation for the bold prescience of the United States Supreme Court in anticipating the needs of our fragmented postmodern and post-Christian polity. What seems to be lost on both the hard right and the hard left is that the Supreme Court itself has quietly abandoned much of its earlier separationist logic in recent years and has moved gradually toward the recognition that both private and public forms of religion deserve constitutional freedom.

JOHN WITTE, JR. *is Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law, Director of the Law and Religion Program, and Director of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion at Emory University.*

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To see this historical story and its modern implications more clearly, we can revisit Jefferson's model of religious liberty and place it in juxtaposition to the model of religious liberty developed by John Adams, his life-long friend and rival. We can then draw out some of the enduring lessons of these two founding models of religious liberty and see how they can be used to understand the trends in Supreme Court decisions on religion.

As our civic catechism has taught us, Thomas Jefferson regarded his 1779 Bill for the Establishment of Religious Freedom in Virginia as a "fair" and "novel experiment." This law, declared Jefferson, defied the ancient assumptions of the West: that one form of Christianity must be established in a community, and that the state must protect and support it against all other religions. Virginia would no longer suffer such state prescriptions or proscriptions of religion. All forms of Christianity must now stand on their own feet and on an equal footing with the faiths of "the Jew and the Gentile, . . . the Mahometan, the Hindu, and [the] Infidel of every denomination." Their survival and growth must depend upon the cogency of their word, not the coercion of the sword—on the faith of their members, not the force of the law.

True religious liberty, Jefferson argued, requires both the free exercise and the disestablishment of religion. The state should protect the liberty of conscience and free exercise of all its subjects—however impious or impish their religious beliefs and customs might appear. "Almighty God hath created the mind free," Jefferson wrote, and thus "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

At the same time, the state should disestablish all religion. The state should not give special aid, support, privilege, or protection to religious doctrines or groups—through special tax appropriations and exemptions, special donations of goods and realty, or special laws of incorporation and criminal protection. The state should not direct its laws to religious purposes. The state should not draw on the services of religious associations, nor seek to interfere in their order, organization, or orthodoxy. As Jefferson put it in his famous 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between a man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate . . . a wall of separation between church and state."

Clergy were to respect this wall of separation as much as politicians. The former needed to stick to their specialty of soulcraft rather than interfere in the specialty of statecraft. Religion is merely "a separate department of knowledge," Jefferson wrote, alongside other specialized disciplines such as physics, biology, law, politics, and medicine. Preachers are the specialists in religion, and are hired to devote their time and energy to this specialty. "Whenever, therefore, preachers, instead of a lesson in religion, put them off with a discourse on the Copernican system, on chemical affinities, on the construction of government, or the characters of those administering it, it is a breach of contract, depriving their audience of the kind of service for which they were salaried."

At precisely the same time that Jefferson was at work defending his 1779 Bill for the Establishment of Religious Freedom for Virginia, John Adams was at work drafting the Massachusetts Constitution. "It can no longer be called in question," he wrote, that "authority in magistrates and obedience of citizens can be grounded on reason, morality, and the Christian religion," without succumbing to "the monkery of priests or the knavery of politicians." It also could no longer be called into question that peace and justice required the state to guarantee religious liberty to all. The best constitutional formula to attain these two goals, Adams concluded, is for the state to balance the freedom of many private religions with the establishment of one public religion.

On the one hand, every society must protect a plurality of peaceable private religions—the rights of which are limited only by the parallel rights of other religions and the duties of the established public religion. The notion that a state could coerce all persons into adherence to a common public religion was for Adams a philosophical fiction. Persons would make their own private judgments in matters of faith. Any attempt to coerce their consciences would only breed hypocrisy and resentment.

Moreover, the maintenance of religious plurality was essential for the protection of civil society and civil liberties. "Checks and balances, Jefferson," Adams later wrote to his friend at Monticello, "are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body. Every Species of Christians would persecute Deists, as either Sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unbalanced

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Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, and Atheists would persecute Deists, with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, Human nature!"

On the other hand, every society must establish by law some form of public religion, some image and ideal of itself, some common values and beliefs to undergird and support the plurality of protected private religions. The notion that a state could remain neutral and purged of any public religion was, for Adams, equally a philosophical fiction. Absent a commonly adopted set of values and beliefs, politicians would invariably hold out their private convictions as public ones. It was thus essential for each community to define and defend the basics of a public religion. In Adams' view, the creed of such a religion was honesty, diligence, devotion, obedience, virtue, and love of God, neighbor, and self. Its icons were the Bible, the bells of liberty, the memorials of patriots, the constitution. Its clergy were public-spirited ministers and religiously committed politicians. Its liturgy was the public proclamation of oaths, prayers, songs, and Thanksgiving- and election-day sermons. Its policy was state appointment of chaplains for the legislature, military, and prisons; state sanctions against blasphemy, sacrilege, and iconoclasm; state administration of tithe collections, test oaths, and clerical appointments; state sponsorship of religious societies, schools, and charities. "Statesmen may plan and speculate for liberty," Adams wrote in defense of his views, "but it is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand." A "Publick Religion" sets "the foundation, not only of republicanism and of all free government, but of social felicity under all governments and in all the combinations of human society."

Embodying Adams' principles, the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 struck a balance between the freedom of peaceable private religions and the establishment of one public religion. Article II stated that: "it is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publickly, and at stated seasons to worship the Supreme Being, the great Creator and preserver of the Universe." Article III provided the reasoning: "the public worship of God and instructions in piety, religion, and morality . . . promote their happiness, and secure . . . the good order and preservation of their government." The same constitution also insisted that all persons, particularly political leaders, maintain rigorous moral and religious standards, which they confirmed in their oaths of office. It also rendered these same moral qualities essential ingredients of education within the state, since "the encouragement of arts and sciences, and all good literature, tends to the honor of God, the advantage of the Christian religion, and the great benefit of this and the other United States of America."

Here are two models of religious liberty offered by two of the greatest luminaries of the American founding era. There were many other models available in their day—some more theological, some more philosophical in tone. But these two models, given the eminence of their authors and the importance of their home states of Virginia and Massachusetts, were of central importance.

Both Jefferson and Adams were self-consciously engaged in a new experiment in religious liberty. Both started with the credo of the American Declaration of Independence which they drafted: that "all men are created equal" and that they have "certain unalienable rights." Both understood that religion is special and must be accorded special constitutional protection. Both understood that religion is more than simply a peculiar form of speech, press, and assembly, and that it deserves its own separate constitutional guarantees. Religion is a unique source of individual and personal identity, involving "duties that we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging them," as their compatriot James Madison put it. Religion is also a unique form of public and social identity, involving a vast plurality of sanctuaries, schools, charities, missions, and other forms and forums of faith. Both individual and corporate, private and public entities and exercises of religion—in all their self-defined varieties—properly deserve constitutional protection.

So much was common to the two men. But while Jefferson advocated a robust freedom of exercise, Adams condoned only a "tempered" religious freedom. While Jefferson urged the separation of church and state, Adams urged only a division of religious and political offices. While Jefferson advocated the disestablishment of all religions, Adams insisted on the "mild and equitable" establishment of one public religion.

For Jefferson, to establish one public religion was to threaten all private religions. To encourage religious uniformity was to jeopardize religious sincerity. To limit religious exercise was to stymie religious development. To enlist the church's ministry was to impugn the state's integrity. Religion was thus best left to the private sphere and sanctuary; church and state were best left separated from each other.

Adams agreed that too little religious freedom was a recipe for hypocrisy and impiety. But too much religious freedom, he argued, was an invitation to

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depravity and license. Too firm a religious establishment would certainly breed coercion and corruption. But too lax a religious establishment would convert private prejudices into constitutional prerogatives. Somewhere between these extremes a society must strike its balance.

It is well known that by the 1940s the United States Supreme Court had chosen to employ Jefferson's model of religious liberty in its interpretation of the First Amendment. In the landmark case of *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the United States Supreme Court for the first time used the First Amendment prohibition on religious establishment to declare local laws unconstitutional. The Court also read Jefferson's call for "a wall of separation between church and state" as the essential meaning and mandate of the First Amendment. In more than thirty cases from 1947 to 1985, the Court used this separationist logic to purge public schools of their traditional religious teachings and practices and to cut off religious schools from their traditional state patronage and preferences. Following these precedents, lower courts found unconstitutional many other traditional ways in which government had protected, participated in, and patronized religion.

This history is well known. It is less widely recognized that over the past two decades the Court has abandoned much of its earlier separationism and has reversed several of its harshest cases on point. While it has not yet crafted a consistent or coherent new First Amendment logic, the Court seems intent on developing a new model of religious liberty that draws on the insights of both Jefferson and Adams—while rejecting their respective calls for the privatization or the establishment of religion. The formula that has begun to emerge is that both private and public forms of religion deserve constitutional freedom and support, though neither may be established or preferred.

Tradition is one strong factor in some of the Court's recent First Amendment cases. The Court had used arguments from tradition a few times before, as part of broader rationales for upholding religious tax exemptions and Sabbath Day laws. In *Marsh v. Chambers* (1983), however, the argument from tradition became the exclusive basis on which the Court upheld a state legislature's practice of funding a chaplain and opening its sessions with his prayers. Lower courts had found this practice patently unconstitutional under the Supreme Court's then prevailing separationist precedents. Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Warren Burger defended such practices as a noble survival of the traditional public role of religion in American life and law: "In light of the unambiguous and unbroken history of more than two hundred years, there can be no doubt that the practice of opening legislative sessions with prayer has become part of the fabric of our society. To invoke Divine guidance on a public body entrusted with making the laws is not, in these circumstances, an 'establishment' of religion [but] simply a tolerable acknowledgement of beliefs widely held among the people of this country."

Arguments from tradition, while by themselves rarely convincing, can sometimes bolster a broader rationale for upholding traditional features of a public religion and a religious public. Tradition can sometimes serve effectively as something of a null hypothesis—to be overcome by strong constitutional arguments rather than discarded by simple invocations of principle. As Justice Holmes once put it: "If a thing has been practised for two hundred years by common consent, it will need a strong case for the Fourteenth Amendment to affect it." Innocuous long-standing practices, therefore, such as religious tax exemptions, military chaplains, prison prayer books, and public displays of the Decalogue and of other religious symbols might well be justified.

There are intellectual dangers inherent in arguing from tradition, as the Court itself demonstrated the following year. In *Lynch v. Donnelly* (1984) the Court upheld a municipality's traditional practice of maintaining a crèche in a public park as part of a large holiday display in a downtown shopping area. "There is an unbroken history of official acknowledgment by all three branches of government of the role of religion in American life," Chief Justice Burger wrote, repeating his *Marsh* argument and now giving an ample list of illustrations.

There is, however, another reason to allow this display the Chief Justice went on to say. Crèches, while of undoubted religious significance to Christians, are merely "passive" parts of "purely secular displays extant at Christmas." They "engender a friendly community spirit of good will" that "brings people into the central city and serves commercial interests and benefits merchants." The prayers that are occasionally offered at the crèche, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote in concurrence, merely "solemnize public occasions, express confidence in the future, and encourage the recognition of what is worthy of appreciation in society." Governmental participation in and support of such "ceremonial deism," the Court concluded, cannot be assessed by "mechanical logic" or "absolutist tests" of establishment. "It is far too late in the day to impose a crabbed reading of the [establishment] clause on the country."

A crabbed reading of establishment would have

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been better than such a crass rendering of religion. For the Court to suggest that crèches are mere advertisements, prayers mere ceremony, and piety mere nostalgia is to create an empty "American Shinto"—a public religion that is perhaps purged enough of its confessional identity to pass constitutional muster, but too bleached and too bland to be religiously efficacious, let alone civilly effective.

Arguments from tradition, while helpful, are thus inherently limited in their ability to define and defend the public place of religion today. Such arguments perforce assume a traditional definition of what a public religion is—namely, a common system of beliefs, values, and practices drawn eclectically from the multiple denominations within a community. In the religiously homogeneous environment of John Adams' day, a public religion of the common denominator and common denomination could still have the doctrinal rigor, liturgical specificity, and moral suasion to be effective. In the religiously heterogeneous environment of our day—with more than a thousand incorporated denominations on the books—no such effective common religion can be readily devised or defended.

More recent cases—from *Widmar v. Vincent* (1981) to *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002)—suggest a new way of defining and defending the legal place of public religion. On several occasions the Court has upheld governmental policies that support the public access and activities of religious individuals and groups—so long as these religious parties act voluntarily, and so long as nonreligious parties also benefit from the same governmental support. According to this logic, Christian clergy were just as entitled to run for state political office as were nonreligious candidates. Church-affiliated pregnancy counseling centers could be funded as part of a broader federal family counseling program. Religious student groups could have equal access to state university and public school classrooms that were open to nonreligious student groups. Religious school students were just as entitled as public school students to avail themselves of general scholarships, remedial aid, and disability services. Religious groups were given equal access to public facilities or civic education programs that were already open to other civic groups. Religious parties were just as entitled as nonreligious parties to display their symbols in public forums. Religious student newspapers were just as entitled to public university funding as those of nonreligious student groups. Religious schools were just as entitled as other private schools to participate in a state-sponsored educational improvement or school voucher program.

These holdings have been defended with wide-ranging constitutional arguments—as a proper accommodation of religion under the establishment clause, as a necessary protection of religion under the free speech or free exercise clauses, and as a simple application of the equal protection clause, among other arguments.

One theme common to many of these cases, however, is that public religion must be as free as private religion. Not because the religious groups in these cases are really nonreligious; not because their public activities are in truth nonreligious; and not because their public expressions are an accepted part of the cultural mainstream. On the contrary, these public groups and activities deserve to be free just because they are religious, just because they engage in religious practices, and just because they sometimes take their stands outside of or against the mainstream. They provide leaven and leverage for the polity to improve.

A second theme common to these cases is that the freedom of public religion sometimes requires the support of the state. Today's state is not the distant, quiet sovereign of Jefferson's day, from which separation was both natural and easy. Today's modern welfare state, whether for good or ill, is an intensely active power from which complete separation is impossible. Few religious bodies can now avoid contact with the state's pervasive network of education, charity, welfare, child care, health care, family, construction, zoning, workplace, taxation, and security regulations. Both confrontation and cooperation with the modern welfare state are almost inevitable for any religion. When a state's regulation imposes too heavy a burden on a particular religion, the free exercise clause should provide a pathway to relief. When a state's appropriation imparts too generous a benefit to religion alone, the establishment clause should provide a pathway to dissent. But when a general governmental scheme provides public religious groups and activities with the same benefits afforded to all other eligible recipients, objections based on the establishment clause are not only "crabbed" but corrosive.

A third theme common to these cases is that a public religion cannot be a common religion. If the religious gerrymandering of *Lynch v. Donnelly* and its progeny had not already made this clear, these more recent cases underscore the point. Today, our public religion must be a collection of particular religions, not a combination of religious particulars. It must be a process of open religious discourse, not a product of ecumenical distillation. All religious voices, visions, and values must be heard and considered in the public square. All public religious services and activities, unless criminal

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or tortious, must be given a chance to come forth and compete in all their denominational particularity.

Some conservative Evangelical and Catholic groups today have understood this. Their rise to prominence in the public square in recent years should not be met with glib talk of censorship or with habitual invocations of Jefferson's mythical wall of separation. The rise of the so-called Christian right should be met with the equally strong rise of the Christian left, of the Christian middle, and of Jewish, Muslim, and other religious groups who contest the right's premises, prescriptions, and policies. That is how a healthy democracy works. The real challenge that the new Christian right poses is not to the integrity of American politics but to the apathy of American religions. It is a challenge for peoples of all faith and of no faiths to take their place in the public forum.

A fourth teaching of these cases is that freedom *of* public religion also requires freedom *from* public religion. Government must strike a balance between coercion and freedom. The state cannot coerce citizens to participate in religious ceremonies and subsidies that they find odious. But the state cannot prevent citizens from participation in public ceremonies and programs just because they are religious. It is one thing to outlaw Christian prayers and broadcasted Bible readings from public schools; after all, students are compelled to be there. It is quite another thing to ban moments of silence and private religious speech in these same public schools. While it may be acceptable to bar direct tax support for religious education, it seems unjustified to bar tax deductions for parents who choose to educate their children in religious schools. Although a strong case can be made that governmental prescriptions of prayers, ceremonies, and symbols in public forums should be banned, it is far from clear that governmental accommodations of private prayers, ceremonies, and symbols in these same public forums should be outlawed.

Individuals should exercise a comparable prudence in seeking protection from public religion. In nineteenth-century America, it was not so much the courts as the frontier that provided this freedom—a place away from it all, where one could escape with one's conscience and one's coreligionists. Today, a frontier still provides this freedom—if not physically in small towns and wild mountains, then virtually, in our ability to sift out and shut out the public voices of religion that we do not wish to hear.

Both modern technology and modern privacy make escape to this frontier considerably easier than in the days of covered wagons and mule trains. Just stop watching the televangelists. Turn away the missionary at your door. Close your eyes to the municipal cross that offends. Cover your ears to the public prayer that you can't abide. Forego the military chaplain's pastoral counseling. Skip the legislative chaplain's prayers. Walk past the town hall's menorah and star. Don't read the Decalogue on the courtroom wall. Don't join the religious student group. Don't read the religious newspapers. Avoid the services of the local pastor. Turn down the trinkets of the colporteurs. Turn back the ministries of the hate-mongers. All these escapes to the virtual frontier, the law does and will protect—with force if necessary. Such voluntary self-protections from religion will ultimately provide far greater religious freedom for all than pressing yet another tired constitutional case. In this way, we shall have incorporated into our public life the best parts of our dual legacy, the finest instincts and principles of both Adams and Jefferson. FT

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The Native

He dropped the Host today, his trembling's worse,
"Can't manage on his own," my mother says
and sends him up some dinner after Mass.
She hopes I might absorb more cultured ways
from a man who keeps a bull on the concrete slats
of a byre behind and cows on parish fields
rent free. His hand is shaking, his jacket stained,
and half-way down a bottle of Frascati
he starts to talk of elegant long meals:

The one with Cardinal Agagianian,
in Via della Cisterna, Trastevere;
Castel Gandolfo, in summer heat again,
a visit from Pope John the Twenty-Third;
Abruzzi truffles, an aftertang of must,
a Sangiovese wine from Tuscany.
He vaguely rambles on, the window blurs,
light drifting towards a soft rain-spotted dusk

"Why should I want it . . . Rome?" he says, "You see,
it shouldn't have been me, this other chap
dropped out . . . or couldn't go . . . and then my name,
as second in the class, came up. I had
to go. Maybe flew too near the flame."
He's dozing now and from his dream I hear
a passage in Italian like a song.
The doorbell makes him start awake. I strain
to identify the car outside—its wipers
swish, a trailer gently steams with dung.

I tell him that it's Ben Maguire's. "Yes, Ben,"
he says, "his mother's been dying now for more
than a month, poor love, perhaps she's near the end."
The bull is bellowing again, there's a burst
of rain and wind. "A tidy farmer though,
What, sixty Friesians now?" He brightens, calls,
"There might be one on heat. Quick, get the door,
you'll never make a priest! Now ask him if
it's me he wants, or does he want the bull."

Oliver Murray

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Books in Review

A Farther Horizon

The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth. By David Bentley Hart. *Eerdmans. 457 pp. $45.*

Reviewed by Geoffrey Wainwright

Few, if any, other theologians could have written *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. The elegance of its style and the sophistication of its arguments are backed by knowledge of languages ancient and modern, familiarity with secular philosophies of the last third of the twentieth century, and a deep commitment to classic Christianity. Writing in polemic and apologetic mode, David Hart exposes the inconsistencies and inadequacies of a postmodernism that inexplicably continues to fascinate some Christian thinkers. When he turns dogmatic and evangelistic, Hart aims at an account of the faith that—like Jesus himself and his gospel—may prove strangely attractive and peacefully persuasive.

If a nutshell could contain this theological world of a book, it might suffice to put its thesis thus: Modern and soi-disant postmodern philosophies remain trapped in some very ancient antinomies and perennial dialectics that bespeak an ontology of violence; by contrast, the gospel offers an ontology of peace, whereby the unity and diversity of creation are embraced—analogically and participatively, redemptively and eschatologically—in the triune God who is manifested and imparted in historical concreteness in Jesus Christ. Such compression, however, would render banal the subtlety and richness of this remarkable work.

Geoffrey Wainwright *holds the Cushman chair of Christian Theology at Duke University.*

An introduction sketches the book's key terms and thereby adumbrates its themes, especially the principal pair of beauty and the infinite, which (it is the author's contention) Christian theology uniquely thinks together. God's infinity is not formlessness but rather the beauty of a boundless agape, eternally and freely shared within the Trinity. This beauty—this exceeding weight of glory (*kabod*)—is displayed in the creation, which God brings into being without any "need" to do so. Created beauty—whose human form is Christ—is that in which God delights, made possible by creation's very distance from God, a distance that can be traversed in utterly gracious gift and freely repeated return. God's infinity is what allows the incessance of the gift and the endlessly modulated variety of the return.

The first third of the book launches into a critical history of Western philosophy—with its most recent phase of "late modernity" in the foreground—and its recurrent failure to allow itself to be opened up by "the Christian interruption." Kant and the Romantics are guilty of a gnostic trivialization of the concretely beautiful in favor of the "sublime" as the veil of the unrepresentable. Nearer the present, the Gallic gurus and their own Germanic masters get their comeuppance. For all his passing nods to their occasional insights, he finds Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, and Levinas massively wrong in their respective accounts of being.

While thus clearing the ground, this first main section also hints at the alternatives that will be offered in the rest of the book. There Hart provides a "minor dogmatics" arranged under the headings of Trinity, creation, salvation, and eschaton. The governing concept is the trinitarian *perichoresis*: the life of the divine persons is that of eternal mutual self-donation and self-reception, which "unnecessarily" overflows as the act of creation and brings home the creatures in salvation. The author's debts in the tradition are chiefly to Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor from the East, and to Augustine and Bonaventure from the West. On the Western front, a nuanced reading of Anselm introduces some qualification into the Abelardian soteriology that is currently in favor and that (in an Eastern mode) predominates in this book. Not surprisingly, it is Hans Urs von Balthasar who emerges as the most influential theologian among the moderns.

God the Holy Trinity constitutes the aboriginal peace. The Christian understanding of God is as "a *perichoresis* of love, a dynamic coinherence of the three divine persons, whose life is eternally one of shared regard, delight, fellowship, feasting, and joy." In the divine and aboriginal ontology, therefore, difference is peaceful, not conflictual, and distance allows communion rather than entailing separation. "Creation *is* divine glory, told anew, and so its aesthetic variety is nothing but the different modes and degrees with which participated being is imparted." The dialogical character of God—Father and Son as address and response in the radiance of the Holy Spirit—allows the Christian story to be itself enacted, then told and thought. Theology is sustained by "the love of beauty" (*philokalia*). In this perspective, Bach can be deemed "the greatest of Christian theologians": "[N]o

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one as compellingly demonstrates that the infinite is beauty and that beauty is infinite. It is in Bach's music as nowhere else, that the potential boundlessness of thematic development becomes manifest: how a theme can unfold inexorably through difference, while remaining continuous in each moment of repetition, upon a potentially infinite surface of varied repetition."

Sin and the fall are allotted no special chapter in this dogmatics (perhaps fittingly so, given that the nature of evil is a "privation of good"), but viewed as violence they run as a negative thread throughout the author's entire argument. As Hart graphically puts it: Christian thought "treats this pervasive violence, inscribed upon being's fabric, as a palimpsest, obscuring another text that is still written (all created being is 'written') but in the style of a letter declaring love." Sin is a refusal of the invitation to taste and see the goodness of the Lord, a suppression of the divine gift possible only as "a perverse display of will." It shows itself in the "all but impossible" failure to love God and neighbor.

Salvation comes by and in Christ, whose presence and history affect our entire race. His incarnation repeats the divine gift of creation; his life and death render the perfect human response; his resurrection inaugurates a new world, the true world restored to itself. The Christian claim and gospel is that the peace associated with the beginning and end of things "do[es] not merely stand outside human history, but enter[s] into it decisively in the resurrection of Christ; the peace of God—the shalom of creation and of the day God declares His rule out of Zion—has a real historical shape and presence, a concrete story, one which has entered into human history as a contrary history, the true story God always tells, in which violence has no place but rather stands under judgment as provisional, willful, needless: nonbeing. The Christian tradition is nothing if not the evangel of this eschatological peace offered in the present moment, as the true form of difference and the style of its transmission: the evangel, that is, of the crucified as the Lord of history, in the perpetual power of the Spirit."

For the human being, subjective entry into the "new" world occurs when one is attracted away from the earthly city, founded (as Augustine knew) upon violence, and one's hitherto misdirected desires are aroused by the objectively, divinely beautiful. One is thus restored and reshaped

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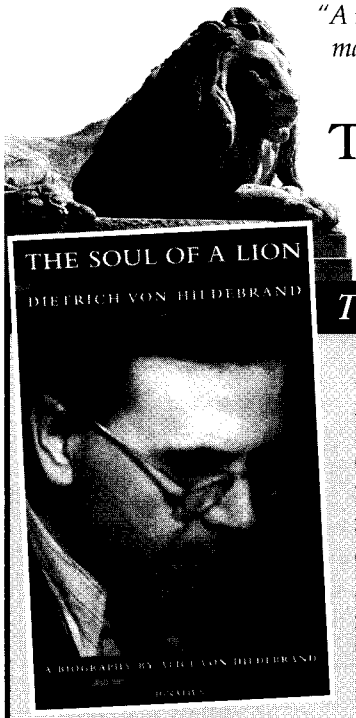
according to the image of God now manifest again in Christ. The perfection toward which one strives—St. Paul being interpreted in light of Gregory of Nyssa's notion of *epektasis*—is limitless, given the inexhaustibility of the God to be enjoyed.

The positive exposition in the dogmatics is offset by the criticisms made of twentieth-century theologians whose chief indebtedness in intellectual history is to Hegel. Against any move that makes the world and its history constitutive of God, rather than revelatory of Him, Hart insists upon the divine *apatheia*, the doctrine that the divine nature is beyond suffering and change, the status of which he rescues from that of a contemporary theological swearword. In a brilliant chapter that sets against Attic tragedy the "trinitarian drama of the cross and empty tomb," the author castigates Donald MacKinnon and, to a lesser degree Nicholas Lash (Jürgen Moltmann is not dignified with a mention), for offering a suffering deity who in the end is not able to save. The resurrection is not to be considered as the vindication of the crucifixion but rather of the crucified Christ. The divine *kenosis* (God's self-emptying) is always simultaneously a *plerosis* (God's fullness). Even Balthasar is slyly rebuked for his "Holy Saturday" theology "with its broad rejection of the traditional triumphalistic imagery of hell's harrowing (a rejection, mercifully, that is progressively moderated in successive volumes of his [Balthasar's] *Theodramatik*)."

In concluding the book, Hart returns to the philosophical attack. He effectively deconstructs the deceptively benign hermeneutics of pluralism that is patterned after "the market's endless fluidity" and has, in fact, its own clandestine master narrative ("the story of no stories"), its own metaphysical assumptions ("the truth of no truths") that set limits to the claims of other narratives. In truth, no neutrality is possible. Some other master narratives (Hart does not say which or how) may have features that make them a preparation for the gospel, but they are all there, at any rate in part, to be defeated by the Christian story. At least in the context of Western culture, Nietzsche's "Antichrist" is the ultimate rival, whose story of violence the Christian story includes and contradictingly surpasses. The "war of the narratives" is a fight to the death that—in the nature of the case and counter to some historic instances—must be conducted by



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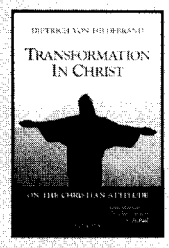

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My most substantial hesitation about the book concerns its failure to put a brake on the drive toward universalism that Gregory of Nyssa propels. Hart coyly admits that "Orthodox tradition does not authorize" him to defend Gregory's "inevitable" universalism. But he himself seems relieved, on his own account, to notice a tendency in Eastern theologians to view hell, if not as (with Gregory) simply "purgation," then as self-inflicted privation rather than perdition. That, however, may not take seriously enough what Maximus says about the eschatological encounter of all persons with the kingdom of God, either according to grace or apart from grace—which might make hell "the absolute proximity of God's glory without the interval of the gift." It is not clear that an account of evil as nonbeing requires that nothing shall in the end be lost.

If it were possible to wish that an already long book should be longer, I might plead for a somewhat thicker description of the "beauty of Christ" beyond the few allusive strokes Hart offers. The transfiguration of Jesus receives no attention, which is odd for an Orthodox writer. The systematician's characteristic task, of course, differs from that of the exegete, the iconographer, the liturgist, and the hagiographer—yet one could wish for more passages like the biblical encomium on wine, the interpretation of Peter's tears, and the last-page evocations from the Gospel stories of the risen Lord's encounters: with Mary Magdalene in the garden, with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and with the seven fishermen at the lakeside.

The book makes dazzling use of the riches of literate English, while shunning the puerile puns of the postmoderns. It is also studded with instances of splendid invective, all of it, of course, grounded in an aboriginal—and leading to an eschatological—peace.

Unless you have a week to spare, don't—yet—pick up this book. If and when you are ready to devote several days of close study to it, read it and you will be amply rewarded. This magnificent and demanding volume should establish David Bentley Hart, around the world no less than in North America, as one of his generation's leading theologians.

The Old Urbanism

Timeless Cities: An Architect's Reflections on Renaissance Italy. By David Mayernik. *Westview. 274 pp. $26.*

Reviewed by Philip Bess

In the moderately memorable 1997 movie *The Edge*, Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin portray characters marooned in the Alaskan wilderness. In their dramatic struggle to survive both the elements and some formidable predators, the Hopkins character takes to repeating, mantra-like, the phrase: "What has been done, can be done." Apart from the merits of this phrase as self-encouragement, as an assertion

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it is self-evidently true. Nevertheless, as Peter Berger once observed, ideas do not succeed in history according to their truth but rather according to their relationship to specific kinds of social structures and processes.

Timeless Cities: An Architect's Reflections on Renaissance Italy calls to mind Berger's caution because the governing ambition of the book—though expressed sotto voce—is to challenge its readers to promote and build cities that aspire to equal if not surpass the most beautiful cities of the Western world—and because its author, David Mayernik, is as aware as anyone that the culture and institutions of modernity are not currently conducive to the creation of such cities. Mayernik is an American architect, painter, urban designer, educator, and webzine publisher who at the tender age (for an architect) of forty-three has already established a reputation as someone dedicated to the reintegration of the building, visual, and rhetorical arts through a series of architectural projects, frescoes, and campus plans executed mostly in Switzerland, Italy, and Great Britain. *Timeless Cities* is a polemic in the guise of a narrative history of five Italian cities and towns—Rome, Venice, Florence, Siena, and Pienza—and an exercise not unlike (if necessarily more visual and less prolix than) Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* in its combination of acute analysis with extraordinary portions of cultural retrieval.

The primary virtue of *Timeless Cities* is found in Mayernik's loving histories of these five cities. He tells us not only how these urban formal orders were shaped by shared convictions about the relationship of cities to human well-being, but also how the physical and spatial forms of these cities shaped the lives of their citizens. Out of these shared convictions and the culture of building they nourished, the architects and patrons of these cities created urban environments and landscapes that were not only extraordinarily beautiful but that also acted as theaters of memory and hope, places that simultaneously referred to and grounded citizens in their origins, the common destiny for which they longed, and the virtues necessary for success in their individual and collective journeys through life.

> All the senses are touched and rewarded [in Rome]: fountains, grottos, balustrades, espaliered orange trees and frescoes were endlessly exploited for their impact on our ears, hands, noses, tongues, and eyes; not for mere delight . . . but to tap our five senses like a good rhetorician to get at our minds and souls. . . . But the real work of making Rome beautiful was driven by the desire to make her speak. It was only because there was some degree of consensus about *what* she should say that we have inherited the poignantly beautiful city that she became over time.

Several themes stand out in Mayernik's accounts of these cities: the persistence of a humanist sensibility grounded in sacred order (including what can only be regarded as a sacramental sense of the relationships among the human body, the city, and the cosmos); the role of memory in the life of traditional cities; the relationship between memory and artistic action; and the city as the physical embodiment of shared aspirations rather than "reality."

> For city builders for more than a thousand years after Augustine the urban realm became a great memory theater where our best aspirations were played out, the

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> place where we said the most substantial things about who we are and what we long for. The city at its best was nothing other than a microcosm of the world, a model of the human mind, and an image of heaven.

Mayernik's great "cultural retrieval" consists of numerous brief but detailed accounts of the reciprocity between the daily and—above all—ritual life of these cities and the character of the places where this life took place. To take just one example, Mayernik describes two venerable Roman processions—the *Possesso*, the papal coronation procession from St. John Lateran to St. Peter's Basilica (i.e., from the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome to the most prestigious church in Rome, the site of St. Peter's tomb and the church closest to the part of Rome continuously inhabited from the fall of Rome to its sixteenth-century rebirth); and the annual *Corpus Domini* procession in the Borgo Vaticano. His descriptions evoke the complex relationship between their respective processional paths, the architecture encountered along the way, the recollection of Rome's Imperial and Christian history, the reality of Rome itself as a Christian reliquary and pilgrimage destination, and the analogy between the human body and the city. Mayernik—graphically, convincingly, but in detail too great here to recount—describes the *Possesso* ceremony as "procession as progression . . . a protracted revelation and recollection . . . a path toward fulfillment [and] culmination"; and the Borgo Vaticano district itself as embodying "a deliberate anthropomorphic intention."

Similarly, Mayernik's account of the fifteenth-century founding of Pienza by the first Renaissance-humanist pope, Pius II (born Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini), is redolent with memory and hope. Pienza was created upon the small town of Corsignano in the landscape of the Tuscan Val d'Orcia, Pius II's boyhood home. Rome was on the verge of urban revival but at that time was still more impressive as a memory, reliquary, symbol, and idea than as a built reality, existing "in the background of the whole humanist Renaissance."

> But what was it specifically about mighty Rome that Pius brought to little Corsignano? There was, first of all, his name, and therefore the name of the town. . . . Recall

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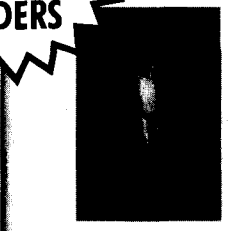

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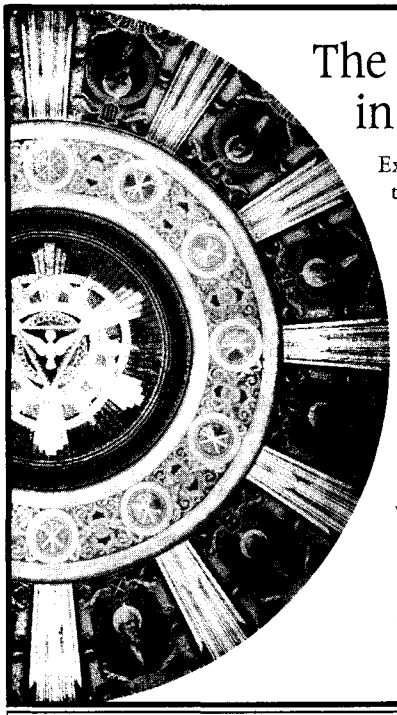
that it was the Trojan refugee Aeneas who founded Rome. Virgil refers to him often as "pious Aeneas," since he evinced such deep respect for his family by saving his father, Anchises, from Troy's flames. . . . Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini was also "pious" in returning to the place where his father lived and was buried to found the town anew and to invest it with a new life. He was a new Aeneas, in the role of the Trojan who founded a new Italic city that would generate Rome. Pius also brought a pragmatic desire to realize in this small town what his papal predecessor Nicholas V desired but could not realize for Rome: the "most perfect paradise" of the Vatican district, a City of God on the Tuscan side of the Tiber. Pius . . . saw his hometown as [a] proving ground of Renaissance ideas . . . a shining light and example to the city of St. Peter.

The cities of which Mayernik writes—and I have been blessed to have spent time in all five—and others like them captivate us to this day; and whatever else can be said about such places, they demonstrate, in the author's words, that "the costs of building great cities can't be justified in purely pragmatic terms." They also remind us of some unpleasant truths: that virtually all of us in the modern world are now mere consumers of great urbanism rather than its producers; and that this earlier vision of cities is now so far removed from the mindset of the modern world that the project of reviving great urbanism may be one best regarded in terms of generations if not centuries. Mayernik's accounts of these cities also confirm a general observation by Philip Rieff: that all the marks of what we regard today as culture—books and vows, prayers and parading, law and architecture, music and the sciences, dancing and filial piety—originated as an address to sacred order from within sacred order, and apparently thrive only within such a context.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK to the analytic and prescriptive intent of *Timeless Cities*, the understated polemical component that threads its way throughout the narrative. It is no accident that Mayernik has had to go to Europe to find the kinds of physical, cultural, and above all *urban* settings—and, not least, the institutional patrons—for the kind of work he has found himself called to do. In spite of our attraction to good cities when we see them, American culture is currently neither conducive nor receptive to the



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kind of architecture and urbanism that Mayernik champions. At several points he touches upon the paradoxes of modern urbanism and the tragic ironies of our cultural attitude toward cities: although we now have more individual freedom, technical ability, and, arguably, social equity, we do not live in places as hospitable to human beings as were our cities of the past; we are pragmatists who build shoddily; our current obsession with historic preservation is the flip side of our utter lack of confidence in our ability to build well; while cultures with shared ascetic ideals and transcendent orientation built great cities and produced great landscapes, modern culture's expressive ideals, dogmatic public secularism, and privatized religiosity produce for us, even with our vast wealth, only private luxury, a spoiled countryside, and a public realm that is both venal and incoherent; above all, we simultaneously idolize nature and ruin it. For all of his intimate knowledge of and love for the Val d'Orcia landscape of his youth, Pius II

> would have shaken his head at the insensitivity to the hand of divinity operating in the city . . . that William Penn evinces in his *Reflections and Maxims*, where the founder of Philadelphia writes, "The country life is to be preferred, for there we see the works of God, but in cities little else but the works of men." For a Christian humanist such as [Pius] the best of human endeavor is as much infused with divine presence as the natural world. Indeed more so, since nature for him is as fallen as man and requires "salvation" by means of positive human intervention, whether in the form of agriculture or architecture.

Mayernik realizes that some of his readers will be unpersuaded and others will be made nervous by his contention that the continuous thread of humanism he describes—the thread that linked classical antiquity to the Middle Ages and to the Renaissance—was essentially religious and specifically, after the fall of Imperial Rome, Christian. But just as the Constantinian Church preserved and transformed the best of the dying civilization of classical antiquity, and planted the seeds of what became the great urban culture of the high Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance, so a post-Constantinian and ecumenical Church might preserve and transform the best features of the corrupted civilization of modernity in service to the next great culture of humanist sacramental urbanism.

Great cities are a product of skills and crafts that architects are only beginning to relearn today through the efforts of people like David Mayernik and organizations such as the Congress for New Urbanism. But great cities are no less a product of communal acts of faith, hope, and love. It is a truism of faith that the more one comes to believe in the sacred the more one recognizes its presence and effects in the world. Perhaps one of the best things Christians can do now for their contemporaries of little faith, or whose faith is private rather than communal, is to promote and make evident the public benefits, the *urban* benefits, of the shared faith of Christian humanism (which for a start means at least getting our own architectural and urban act together). This will require architects and patrons generally, and Christian architects and patrons in particular, to retrieve and renew our own best city-making traditions. Whether in the foreseeable future these renewed traditions will become the culture-wide possession of many or the preserved treasure of a marginal few, *Timeless Cities* is a good introduction for anyone who wants to begin thinking about the complexity of the task.

Conquistador of Reason

Jefferson's Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind. By Michael Knox Beran. *Free Press. 266 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by Wilfred M. McClay

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is a little different from the other great monuments of Washington, D.C. Standing apart from the bustle of the National Mall, it nestles peacefully amid the greenery ringing the banks of the Tidal Basin. The purity of its brilliant white dome makes for one of the city's loveliest sights, particularly when framed in spring by the pink splendor of the Basin's famous cherry blossoms. Such an exquisite natural setting for John Russell Pope's stately neoclassical design has seemed to make the memorial an appropriate embodiment of the man it memorializes—elegant, poised, orderly, delicate, tasteful, self-contained, cool, and aloof.

Yet for all its beauty it is also among the least visited of the great monuments. Tourists rarely miss the Washington Monument or the Lincoln Memorial. But they often will take a pass on visiting the Jefferson, being content to view it from afar, or to glimpse it fleetingly while driving across the Potomac River to or from Virginia. It is a little off the beaten path. But so are many of the world's great shrines, and few are as restful and appealing. Why, then, this neglect of Mr. Jefferson's place? Is this any way for us to treat the author of the most sacred of our civil-religious scriptures, the only American who has ever been seri-

Wilfred M. McClay *teaches history and humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. His most recent book, co-edited with Hugh Heclo, is* Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America *(Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).*

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ously put forward as a candidate for "the man of the millennium"?

Part of the answer surely has to do with the steady erosion of Jefferson's reputation in recent years. The Apollonian composure of the Jefferson Memorial represents only part of the Jefferson story. To call Thomas Jefferson a complex, paradoxical, and even contradictory figure is, by now, merely to repeat conventional wisdom that has become an idée fixe of Jefferson scholarship. Every biographer in recent years (including Michael Knox Beran in his new study, *Jefferson's Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind*) has been intent upon showing us a more human Jefferson—more conflicted, more tortured, more indecisive, more elusive, more Dionysian. Yet the humanity thereby exposed has come at the expense of his public stature. No one dares to speak anymore of the Sage of Monticello without using scare quotes. The historian Joseph J. Ellis, in fact, went so far as to reassign the title to Jefferson's rival, John Adams, naming his study of Adams *Passionate Sage* (2001). Ellis's biography of Jefferson? It's called *American Sphinx* (1996).

Some of this reassessment is deserved. The excessive claims on Jefferson's behalf for so many years, in both the popular culture and the scholarly literature, and especially by his liberal and Southern admirers, could not survive an honest reckoning with his genuine failings and inconsistencies, especially with regard to his own slaveholding. Truth be told, there is precious little of Jefferson's specific legacy as a political thinker that has survived intact into the twenty-first century. The Civil War demolished the concept of state sovereignty and undermined the "compact" theory of the Constitution. The rapid disappearance of the Western frontier, the growth of massive cities and a huge industrial economy, and the growing consolidation of agriculture put paid to Jefferson's fervently held agrarian ideals. The Progressive movement and the New Deal—both championed by a political party that looked to Jefferson as its progenitor—brought an end to the Jeffersonian ideal of a minimal state. Jefferson would not have approved of the nation assuming the burden of world leadership in the years after the Second World War, or the burden of sustaining a massive standing armed force. By using the power of the national government to break down racial segregation in the South, the country renounced the racial separatism that Jefferson had insisted upon. Even Jefferson's status as a principal figure in the American Enlightenment has suffered from the more general disparagement of the Enlightenment in the postmodern academy. Perhaps only Jefferson's reputation as an advocate of free speech and religious liberty has survived, but even that record has been badly distorted by those who mistakenly make Jefferson into a militant partisan of the naked public square.

Still, the criticisms have gone too far. Jefferson is, in some ways, a victim of the present age's small-minded rage against the very idea that imperfect men can still be heroes—and that we can need such heroes. Perhaps we live in an era that finds so little to admire in itself that it feels compelled to cut the storied past down to the size of the tabloid present. Certainly our era is only rarely capable of a mature exercise of the historical imagination, particularly when still-sensitive issues of race are involved. But when all is said and done, Thomas Jefferson deserves to

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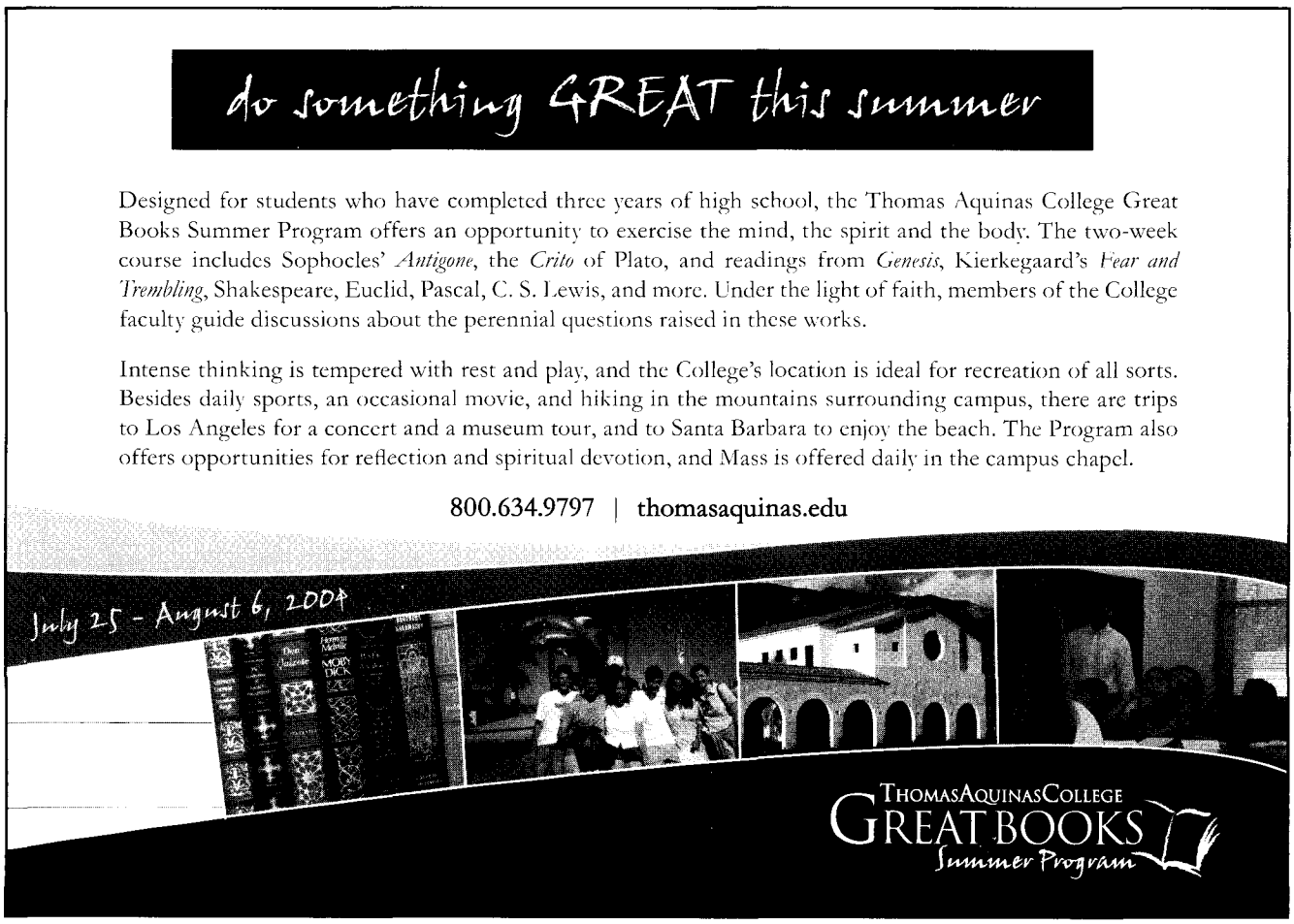
be remembered and revered as a great intellect and great patriot whose worldwide influence for good has been incalculable and whose belief in the dignity, wisdom, and unrealized potential to be found in the minds and hearts of ordinary people is at the core of what is greatest in the American democratic experiment. It is in this sense that James Parton, one of Jefferson's early biographers, was correct when he declared: "If Jefferson is wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was right."

Michael Knox Beran seems to understand much of what is at stake here, and although *Jefferson's Demons* can best be described as yet another study of Jefferson's psychological and philosophical complexities, it is at least not an effort to debunk or degrade him. True, it is a book that is relentlessly situated in the psyche of its subject, with all other concerns tending to take a backseat. In that sense, it does not deviate much from the conventional pattern of recent years. Still, it often points us usefully toward a more seasoned and realistic understanding of the heroic, and for that reason, it is a valuable undertaking. It aims at a view of Jefferson that is genuinely admiring without skirting his faults.

But Beran's Jefferson is nothing like the serene and composed presence suggested by the Jefferson Memorial. He is a man subject to remarkable internal conflicts, whose life moved in fits and starts, whose temper alternated between sunny optimism and black despair—between periods of frenetic public activity and times of intensely private (and often anguished) withdrawal, followed then by a burst of recovery and renewal of the cycle. Some of the most interesting observations offered by the book come in Beran's discussion of Jefferson's years in Paris from 1784 to 1789, when he was dispatched by the fledgling U.S. government to negotiate commercial agreements with the European powers. Jefferson had been sent abroad partly to help him shake off the despair that had enveloped him after his frustrating and tumultuous years as the governor of Virginia, followed by the devastating loss of his beloved wife. And the cure worked, bringing Jefferson a new energy and sense of purpose which would in turn fuel the most productive years of his public life.

Clearly a part of the cure was Jefferson's infatuation with the Italian-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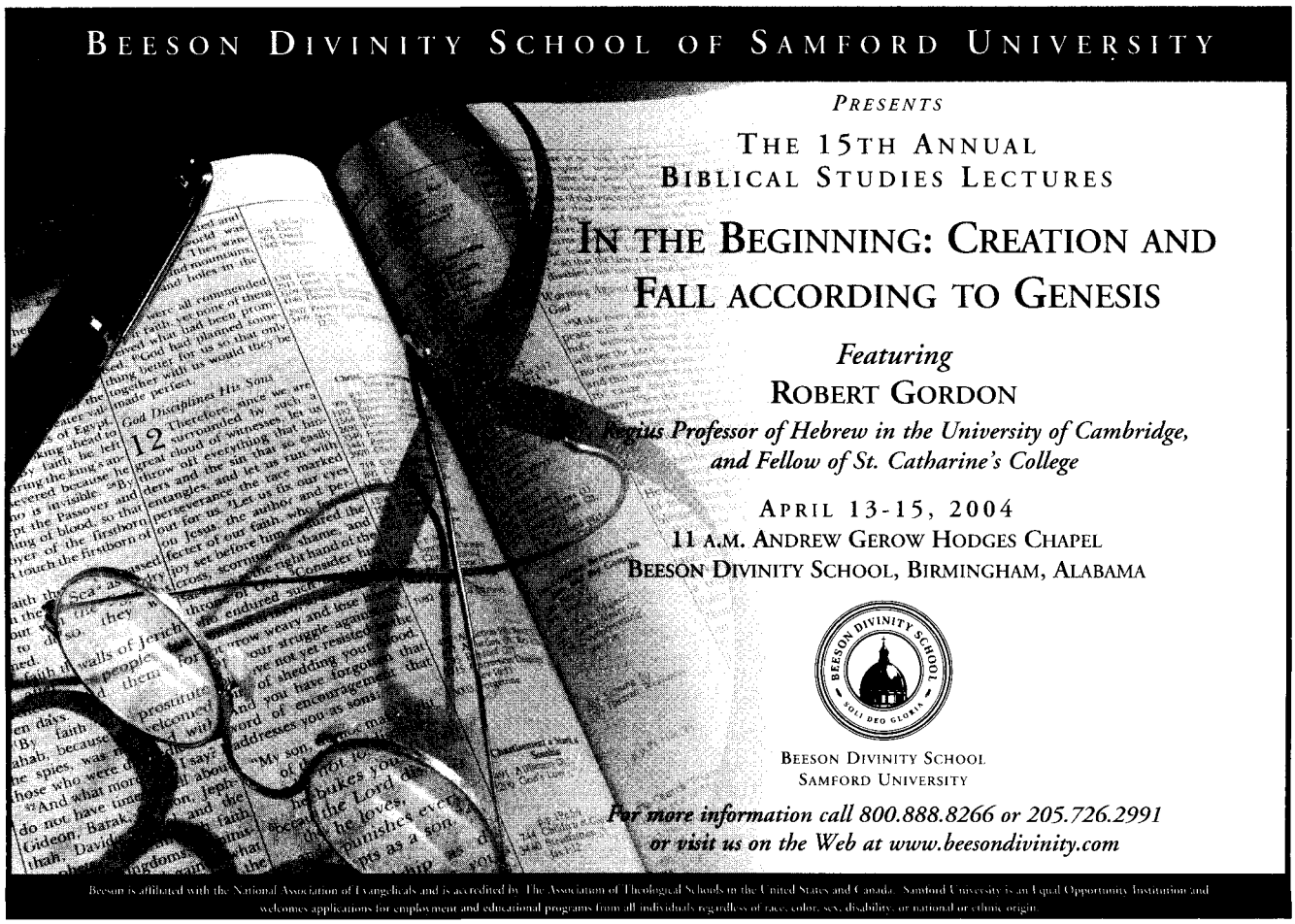
born (and married) artist Maria Cosway, with whom he had a passionate but seemingly unconsummated involvement. That part of the story is well known, and its effect in reawakening Jefferson's dormant passions and sentiments seems incontestable. But Beran also places great weight on the salutary effects of Jefferson's grand-tour travels through the ancient towns and picturesque ruins of Mediterranean Europe, where he encountered evocative remnants of the old pagan civilizations of the distant past. Jefferson kept copious records of these encounters and recounted them with gusto. Beran argues that the experiences provided him with an infusion of *élan vital*, Dionysian energy to counter a gloom to which Apollonian rationalism had no answer. Beran adduces some evidence for the lingering effect of these experiences—at Monticello, for example, where Jefferson included griffins and images of blood sacrifice in the decor of his parlor, or in the imagery of Jefferson's famous statement that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

It is not clear how important these claims are, even if they are true. But their plausibility tends to evaporate when they are considered in context. The decor of Jefferson's parlor (as of 1809) was a hodgepodge of artifacts, featuring some forty-one paintings, including prominent portraits of Locke, Newton, Bacon, Columbus, Magellan, Washington, Franklin, and Madison—all figures important to Jefferson as conquistadors for the empire of reason. Jefferson's house was filled with all kinds of bric-a-brac—telescopes, microscopes, clocks, musical instruments, card tables, Indian pipes, buffalo robes, antlers, bones, maps, and so on—suggestive of his immense curiosity and his wide interest in natural science, natural history, technological innovation, domestic amusement, and the great variety of human cultures and practices, past and present. Given Jefferson's fascination with Native American culture, it is not really very surprising that images suggestive of pagan practices such as those Beran describes would be of interest to Jefferson. Almost everything else was, too. Attributing such overriding importance to just these particular things seems wildly arbitrary. Nor, for that matter, is there much significance to be derived from Jefferson's image of "the blood of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patriots and tyrants," in which Beran claims to detect, in a particularly ingenious move, the influence of Mediterranean fertility mysticism, traceable to the cult of the Phrygian king-god Attys. It seems far more plausible, and much simpler, to call it a commonplace figure of speech.

Such is the pattern of much of Beran's book: it piles up mountains of impressive but gratuitous erudition, expressed in exceptionally florid prose, to support arguments that are either familiar or slightly absurd, and that give us, in any event, an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the whole man. There is a thesis-driven quality to his use of such tangential evidence which leads to serious distortions. Almost absent from his portrait, for example, is a consideration of Jefferson's overarching and unflagging interest in science, which was consistent throughout his adult life, as evidenced by his service as president of the American Philosophical Society from 1797 to 1815, years that encompass his two terms as President of the United States. Nor is proper attention paid to his overwhelming passion for gadgetry, which so impresses a visitor to Monticello: the revolving bookstand, the dumbwaiter, the copying machine, the automatic double doors, the Great Clock, the triple-sash window, and countless other gizmos that Jefferson himself either designed or adapted.

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Almost all of these converts came to the Church at an advanced age. The question is why did it take them so long?

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Perhaps even more importantly, Beran has nothing to say about the fact that beneath all of Jefferson's varied interests was a robust and foundational concept of nature as a normative and intelligible force ordering the world. Jefferson's commitment to a liberal and tolerant political order has nothing in common with postmodernism's moral relativism and indifference to considerations of truth. On the contrary, his ideal political and social order is everywhere securely grounded in a normative understanding of nature, which supplies us with unproblematic, "self-evident" moral truths that are universally accessible to unaided human reason. Hence Jefferson saw nothing to fear from the unimpeded exercise of reason, since it would inevitably carry us all to the same safe harbor, in a way that the divisive, superstition-laced dogmas of tradition or revealed religion could not. Indeed, there was more to be feared from such dogmas, he thought, precisely because their acceptance might foster in the national character passivity and dependence, instead of the vigorous and independent "spirit" that democratic self-rule requires. To leave his concept of nature out of an account of Jefferson's philosophy is like leaving God out of an account of John Calvin's.

There are, however, two areas in which Beran's account of Jefferson is very acute and well worth taking to heart. First, he stresses the centrality of Jefferson's emphasis upon the "small platoons" of social existence, and the fact that this part of Jefferson's philosophy still has much to teach us. For all his reclusiveness, Jefferson knew that public life was a kind of school of the soul and thought it crucial to preserve the vitality of local institutions, precisely because a constitutional order grounded in federalism and decentralization would allow citizens to perfect the full range of civic virtues through the exercise of their natural right to self-government. A consolidated national state, which eliminated such opportunities in the name of cultural unity and centralized efficiency, was not only constitutionally suspect and politically unwise in Jefferson's eyes. It was morally wrong, since it deprived Americans of the proximate public venues in which they would have the opportunity to exercise their public selves. "Jefferson's insight into the nature and function of the little community in a modern world," Beran rightly concludes, "was full of moral intelligence."

Bearn's second useful point carries implications that take us far beyond Jefferson, to the roots of modernity itself. "He loved to play the child of light, the rational *illuminato*," Beran writes. "Yet he drew on the very traditions he censured in order to tread out his own prophetic wine." Exactly right. The sentence is an example of Beran's tendency to overwrite, and to let his thoughts get obscured by mixed metaphors and convoluted syntax. But the thought behind it is not only correct but profound.

One cannot forget this tacit dependency on the past, not only in understanding Jefferson, but in assessing the careers of that gallery of conquistadors on his parlor wall, and with them, much of the intellectual history of modernity and postmodernity alike. We still live under the political and moral canopy of certain eighteenth-century documents, notably the Declaration of Independence itself, and it is therefore incumbent upon us to know what these documents mean and what beliefs they silently presume. Among these is a belief in the normative order of nature, without which Jefferson's central commitment, and ours—to the dignity, wisdom, and unrealized potential to be found in the minds and hearts of ordinary people—is unlikely to have much of a future.

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Art's Truth

Art: A New History. By Paul Johnson. *HarperCollins. 777 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by John J. Reilly

Yes, it is possible to write a single-volume general history of art, if you narrow the definition and focus on your own enthusiasms. Paul Johnson is best known for his large-scale histories, written in the Burkean tradition of moralizing conservatism. He is also, however, a serious painter himself, and the son of a professional. He suggests that he might have made art his career, but his father warned him that the future would belong to charlatans such as Picasso. Actually, what's remarkable about *Art: A New History* is that it's mostly about what the author likes. This is a commendable approach that all conservative cultural critics should emulate, especially with regard to twentieth-century material.

You can put only so much into a profusely illustrated 777-page oversized book (with still not nearly enough illustrations). "Art" here means physical art objects: painting, architecture, and sculpture, in about that order of emphasis, but also mosaic, stained glass, landscaping, and even tattooing and body painting. For the most part, it's Western art; the rest of the world enters in as it affects the art of the West.

The author has his theories; or better, his standards. Art, we learn, is part of the essential human search for order and pattern. The highest art, in Johnson's view, tells the truth about life, which generally means that it is figurative. Still, all art is editing, whether the result is highly formalized or photographically realistic. The healthy norm for art throughout history has been a continuous tension between a canon of technique and the need of individual artists to express themselves. The tension takes the form of long waves, in which generations of complication and refinement alternate with generations of simplicity and classicism.

Johnson deplores the modern prejudices against drama in figurative art, and even against mere size. What the Renaissance called *terribilità* is not so different from what Burke meant by "the sublime." The author also insists on the reality of "fine art." Such works can be created only with notable skill. They repay a second look, and many looks thereafter, as one of the characteristics of fine art is a capacity to delight that outlives its period. In this, as in other ways, it differs from what Johnson calls "fashion art," in which the level of novelty exceeds the level of skill. Fashion art's capacity to please is soon exhausted, thus generating the demand for more fashion art, and yet more. When fashion art crowds out fine art, that is a bad thing.

Johnson moves with due caution through the intimidating specialties of Paleolithic art and ancient Near Eastern art, and into the time of the Greeks and Romans. Here the story begins to deal with known artists and acknowledged masterpieces, mostly sculptures of the human figure. Johnson follows the sad story of Greco-Roman painting: little of it has survived (none of much merit) and there is no reason to suppose that the lost works were much better. As for the decline of classical art, all we really learn is that something snapped in the second century A.D. A century later, emperors were reduced to stripping ornaments from earlier monuments to use on their own memorials.

Johnson emphasizes the continuities, both chronological and geographical, between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Northern Europe drove the transition, especially in drawing, more than the Italians have ever been willing to admit. Interesting as all this is, Johnson is obviously chomping at the bit to get to artists who typically did what he does, which is to paint in oils on canvas (or later, on paper with watercolors). Johnson laments that artists of Giotto's skill were still restricted to the fresco, an awkward and notoriously fragile medium. When we get to Caravaggio (1573-1610), there is a virtual sigh of relief: at last we are talking about oil painting, with chiaroscuro, dramatic subject matter, and a complete grasp of perspective and lighting. Art had achieved the mature form from which it would not begin to decline until the end of the nineteenth century.

No sooner was the paint dry on Caravaggio's canvases than the first of a series of classical revivals set in to correct what were seen to be his excesses, a dialectic that continued throughout the long climacteric of art in the West. The chief theater of creativity shifted from Italy (where cultural life never quite recovered after the decline of papal patronage) to the west and north. Johnson has a merry time explaining how French governmental interference spoiled French academic painting, particularly by disparaging landscapes. The best portraiture in history was, of course, done in the Low Countries, in an unexampled tradition that continued until the economic eclipse of the Netherlands by England. The rise of the private market for art made that tradition possible. (The same pattern manifested itself in architecture in England, where Whig grandees built fine country homes to rival the tawdry splendor of Versailles.)

Johnson is keen on nineteenth-century landscape painting, chiefly

John J. Reilly *is the author, most recently, of* The Perfection of the West *(Xlibris Corporation, 2003). He lives in Jersey City, New Jersey.*

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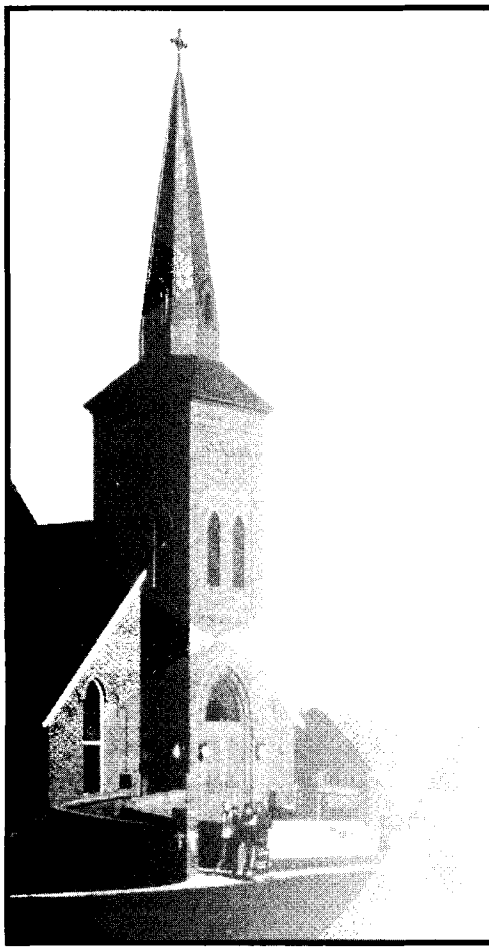
the American Hudson River School ("Illuminist" is the term that later art criticism prefers for this episode), and he also surveys similar work in the rest of the English-speaking world. His nominee for best painting of the nineteenth century is a disturbing interior scene from Russia: Ilya Repin's "They Did Not Expect Him." The painting brings the viewer into the story of a man just returning to a middle-class home from exile in Siberia. For my money, though, the truly jaw-dropping illustration in the book is John Sargent's "Carnation, Lilly, Lilly, Rose."

THE CONJUNCTION of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the new treatment of light by J. M. W. Turner marked the great turning point in the history of Western art. Turner was trying to implement Goethe's theory of sight as the perception of color rather than of shapes, but he had no intention of moving away from figurative art, quite the opposite. As for the Pre-Raphaelites, they were the first "movement," complete with a manifesto and the will to shock. What surprises now is that they were, as Johnson reminds us, part of a Christian revival, a revival that affected all the arts in the nineteenth century. A string of unintended consequences ensued.

It was in Paris, of course, that things started to go off the rails. The Impressionists were actually a pretty conservative bunch, fine draftsmen for the most part. Like Turner, they thought that the most important aspect of painting was color. They experimented with abstraction as a type of foregrounding. Manet introduced some technical innovations that made painting "faster." All this was to better represent immediate experience. The real trend, however, was to represent what the artist knew was there, even if that meant abandoning perspective and accurate figure drawing. So the Cubists increasingly did. Soon surrealists learned to treat the artwork simply as an object. Both tendencies moved away from representation. Novelty became easier to produce and found a ready market. Thus the fashion-art engine was ignited, and flights of imposture took off.

Johnson finds much to commend in the twentieth century's fine arts, including all the major representational artists he can find (not an enormous number, really). He is



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tolerant of abstractionists such as Kandinsky, whose work can be enjoyed without knowing his theory. Even the theory-minded Mondrian had integrity. For the most part, though, Johnson finds the fine art of the twentieth century cynical, ephemeral, and repetitive. The last point is important: the installations and performance art of the last third of the twentieth century simply repeated the Dada of the early decades, but without the humor of the original. Too much twentieth-century art was perpetrated by great impostors. For Johnson, the arch-impostor was Picasso, a manufacturer of fashion objects on an industrial scale. The fine arts at the beginning of the twenty-first century still suffer from systemic distortions. A cartel of fashion artists, gallery directors, and art dealers contrives to bid up the price of new fashion art and to unload it on the public galleries. (Aren't people who sell corporate stocks in this manner subject to arrest?)

The fashion artists had entertainment value, and even a kind of skill: people who tried to reproduce Jackson Pollock's effects, for instance, generally found that they couldn't. Still, the best measure of Johnson's contempt for the art of the century just past is perhaps this faint praise of Andy Warhol: "He was not so much an artist, for his chief talent was for publicity, as a comment on twentieth-century art, and as such a valuable person, in a way."

IN PRODUCT DESIGN and in architecture, the original impulse of the Pre-Raphaelite movement had good effects until almost the middle of the twentieth century. It lasted only a few years, of course, but it begat the Arts & Crafts movement, which begat Art Nouveau, which was really just an early form of Art Deco. Johnson loves Art Nouveau down to the last futon, and grieves that so much was scrapped by 1950. (The White House was extensively decorated by Tiffany, Johnson reports, but Theodore Roosevelt got rid of it all: Louis Tiffany, Roosevelt said, had "laid his hands on other men's wives.") Louis Sullivan's skyscrapers were in this tradition. Sullivan actually laid down the principle that "form follows function," by which he meant that decoration should relate to the purpose of the building, not that buildings should not be decorated. This philosophy produced several decades of fine buildings, from cathedrals to railway sta-

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tions. (There has yet to be a fine airport, in Johnson's estimation.)

Unfortunately, by the middle of the century Germany had done for architecture what France had done for painting. Walter Gropius, we are told, suffered from a physical handicap that made it impossible for him to manipulate a pencil, but he was a master of ideology, most of it wrongheaded. Gropius' Bauhaus sought "a new architecture for the machine age." This ignored more than a century of experience with industrial design and new materials, much of it as good as building has ever been. Then there was the Bauhaus preference for straight lines over curves, based on the bizarre notion that straight lines were "scientific." The theories may have been comical (especially when Le Corbusier got hold of them) but their results were unfunny—the three most dismal decades in architecture since the fall of Rome.

In the age of the "machines for living," according to Johnson, glass-walled libraries baked their books, hospitals killed their patients, and the people forced to dwell in glass-and-concrete boxes showed a marked tendency toward homicide. This assessment is a caricature, but certainly the official architecture of the third quarter of the twentieth century was often both banal and uncomfortable.

HAPPILY, THE ICE BEGAN to break in the 1970s. Major buildings were again free to be ugly in an interesting way. Public works, particularly bridges, were often stunning. Johnson looks benignly on the "Lower Frivolity," the riotous mixture of styles that such places as Las Vegas exemplify. Such structures are temporary, and they are fun. The problem is the "Higher Frivolity" represented by buildings like Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao: they are fun, too, but the joke gets old. In addition, painting and sculpture are reviving, after decades in which art schools made a point of not teaching their students how to draw. Johnson is sanguine: "Human life is short but the life of art is long and the best is yet to come." Still, the advances in the art of restoration on which Johnson dwells are not the stuff from which Renaissances are made. Perhaps we are looking toward a period whose work will be chiefly the recovery of the great tradition. This book shows that succeeding in that task will be no small glory.

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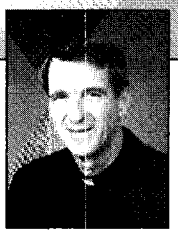

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Briefly Noted

"We Are Lincoln Men": Abraham Lincoln and His Friends. By David Herbert Donald. *Simon & Schuster. 269 pp. $25.*

David Herbert Donald, an eminent historian and the author of a splendid 1995 biography of Abraham Lincoln, has published an eloquent and absorbing reflection on Lincoln and his friendships, with chapters on Joshua Speed (Lincoln's best friend in early manhood), William Herndon (his law partner), Orville Browning (an Illinois political colleague), William Seward (a presidential rival and then Lincoln's secretary of state), and John Hay and John Nicolay (Lincoln's private secretaries during his presidency). All of these relationships are subtly analyzed by Donald, but perhaps the most interesting friendships were with Hay and Nicolay. These two intelligent and able assistants were very close to and completely trusted by Lincoln throughout the Civil War, and they were aware early on of Lincoln's greatness. Lincoln spoke with them often about the larger meaning of the momentous struggle to save the Union. Hay recorded that Lincoln told him at one point: "I consider the central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity that is upon us, of proving that popular government is not an absurdity. We must settle this question now, whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose. If we fail it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves." Donald stays close to the available evidence —of which there is not all that much: as Herndon put it, Lincoln was "the most shut-mouthed man." And when Donald engages in speculation, he does so in a manner that is invariably thoughtful, restrained, and free of distracting psychological jargon. This book takes the generally neglected subject of friendship and skillfully uses it to illuminate Lincoln's life and character.

—Gregory J. Sullivan

The Song of Songs: Interpretations by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators. Translated and edited by Richard A. Norris, Jr. *Eerdmans. 325 pp. $40.*

This is the first volume in a monumental and most welcome project. Under the general editorship of Robert Louis Wilken of the University of Virginia, the series (titled *The Church's Bible)* makes available to scholars, preachers, and the general reader a strikingly fresh way of understanding the Scriptures: the way they were read in the first millennium of Christian history. The Song of Songs, traditionally attributed to Solomon, is an intensely erotic poem that is something of an embarrassment to the modern Christian mind. Many, if they read it at all, wonder what it is doing in the Bible. To the early Christian interpreters of the Bible, however, it was an endlessly delightful invitation to explore the mysteries of the faith. A great merit of Norris' compilation is that it provides not just snippets but substantial excerpts from these early commentaries, some of them translated into English for the first time. Here are Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, Richard of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, and other notables playfully, insightfully, hungrily, reverently mining every word and trope in demonstrating that the text belongs not to antiquity but to the living Church. Serious students of the Bible will want to consider subscribing to the entire series, which holds the promise of powerfully enriching and recasting scriptural study in the twenty-first century. All those associated with this ambitious project, including the publisher, have put us in their debt.

Christ Is My Life. By Marcial Maciel. *Sophia. 287 pp. $19.95.*

A book-length interview with Marcial Maciel, the eighty-three-year-old founder of Regnum Christi and the Legionaries of Christ. These movements are as sharply criticized by self-styled Catholic progressives as they are enthusiastically celebrated by others. Regnum Christi is a lay movement aimed at helping people to fulfill their vocations in the world, while the Legionaries have been astonishingly successful in recruiting young men to the priesthood. The organization has 550 priests and 2,500 seminarians, and is now moving in a major way into Catholic higher education, most recently with a new university in Sacramento, California. Maciel's story, from a young man in Mexico who received a vision of what might be to the leader of a worldwide insurgency in fidelity to the Church's teaching, is affectingly told.

In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice. By David Nelson Duke. *University of Alabama Press. 305 pp. $39.95.*

Almost forgotten in the last two decades of his life and completely forgotten today except by students of American religious history, Ward was a nationally prominent radical in the early twentieth-century tradition of Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel movement. By the 1940s, he was marginalized by the "Christian realism" of his colleague

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at New York's Union Theological Seminary, Reinhold Niebuhr. Though Ward was a Communist and apologist for the Soviet Union even after the worst was known, his biographer asks the reader to admire his "idealism" and "deep convictions."

WORDS TO GOD'S MUSIC: A NEW BOOK OF PSALMS. By LAURANCE WIEDER. *Eerdmans. 186 pp. $25.*

These are not translations but 150 poetic reflections prompted by the Psalms. To the objection that this is not what a psalm actually says, the response is that this is what a psalm suggests, at least to Laurance Wieder, who is acutely attentive to inspired suggestiveness.

DAMN SENATORS. By MARK GAUVREAU JUDGE. *Encounter. 170 pp. $25.95.*

This book is about the author's grandfather, who played first base, about the only year the Washington Senators won the World Series, about the city that Washington was and is now, and about an America that seemed to have a firmer hold on what matters. Why it should be given a notice in a journal of religion, culture, and public life is a question that makes no sense to the baseball nuts on our editorial staff. Also, Mr. Judge, who writes regularly for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Crisis*, and the *Washington Post*, is a contributor to these pages.

WHAT PRICE BETTER HEALTH? HAZARDS OF THE RESEARCH IMPERATIVE. By DANIEL CALLAHAN. *University of California Press. 329 pp. $29.95.*

Callahan has been a tireless crusader against the technological hubris and frequent fraud that drives more of medical research than we want to believe. The delusion of immortality and the claim that a few billion dollars more will "help find a cure" for this ill or that sustains a research industry that is as prone to exploiting desperate hopes as to engaging in experiments of dubious morality.

WILL CATHOLICS BE "LEFT BEHIND"? By CARL E. OLSON. *Ignatius. 394 pp. $15.95 paper.*

A detailed and effective Catholic critique of sundry forms of "Bible prophecy," millennialism, and other excitements about the End Time. More than that, Olson provides a compelling and orthodox vision of time, eternity, and the Last Things. A useful work of popular apologetics.

LISTENING TO THE PAST: THE PLACE OF TRADITION IN THEOLOGY. By STEPHEN R HOLMES. *Baker. 166 pp. $17.95 paper.*

Addressing Protestants who think *sola scriptura* makes the history of reflection on Scripture superfluous, an Anglican theologian argues for the indispensability of disciplined interpretation, invoking figures as various as Anselm, Jonathan Edwards, Coleridge, and Barth.

MARRIAGE AND MODERNIZATION. By DON S. BROWNING. *Eerdmans. 386 pp. $28 paper.*

A wise professor of ethics at the University of Chicago delivers on the subtitle of this book, "How Globalization Threatens Marriage and What to Do About It." Employing research on the worldwide drift of men from parental responsibility, Browning examines social, moral, religious, and economic dynamics that are weakening the family, and proposes both practical and theoretical resources for strengthening the institution of marriage.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

NASTY AND NICE IN POLITICS AND RELIGION

A half-truth is, more often than not, the half that we prefer to believe, or prefer that others believe. David Brooks, now a columnist for the *New York Times*, observes: "These days political parties grow more orthodox, while religions grow more fluid. In the political sphere, there is conflict and rigid partisanship. In the religious sphere, there is mobility, ecumenical understanding, and blurry boundaries. If George Bush and Howard Dean met each other on a political platform, they would fight and feud. If they met in a Bible study group and talked about their eternal souls, they'd probably embrace." That's a half-truth very nicely put.

Mr. Brooks has read and has been, unfortunately, unduly impressed by Alan Wolfe's *The Transformation of American Religion*, which argues that religion in America is now totally captive to the American Way of Life, which is, in turn, indistinguishable from Mr. Wolfe's putatively tolerant secularism (see my reflection on Wolfe's thesis, "The Superficial in Pursuit of the Superficial," Public Square, December 2003). Echoing Wolfe, Brooks depicts evangelical Protestantism in particular as an anodyne mix of optimism, self-help, and doctrinally indifferent hustling in the marketplace of American spiritualities, all of which are faithful to "the national creed." The national creed is that creeds don't matter. "Evangelical churches are part of mainstream American culture, not dissenters from it," writes Brooks, following Wolfe.

As with most caricatures, this caricature of religion in America, and of evangelicalism in particular, contains considerable truth. Religion in America, like America itself, is so vast and so various that almost any caricature is amply supported by evidence. Half-truths are, after all, half true. I will not repeat what I wrote in the abovementioned reflection on why it is reasonable to think that Alan Wolfe, not to put too fine a point on it, doesn't know what he is talking about when it comes to what the great majority of Americans think, believe, and do religiously. Both Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Brooks want to reassure their enlightened and mainly secular readership—and I expect they do share the same readership—that the "religious right" is largely a myth and that religion in the public square is really quite harmless. These deliverances have a piquant note. Only in America, as it is said, does one have two Jews publicly certifying that Christianity is, in Mr. Wolfe's phrase, "safe for democracy." We Christians are grateful, I'm sure. Where do we apply for citizenship?

Harold Bloom rendered a similar service several years ago with his book *The American Religion*, which argued that American Christianity is really not very Christian. It is, rather, Gnosticism with a few vestigial elements of a distinctively Christian tradition. Mr. Bloom's book is a playfully provocative reading of popular religious sensibilities, and I've come to think more of it than I did when I first reviewed it in *Commentary*. His argument goes some way toward explaining the bestseller status of Elaine Pagels and others who peddle the Gospel of Thomas and Gnostic spiritualities as "alternative" Christianities. What we have in all these cases, however, are

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Jewish thinkers offering revisionist accounts of a "Christian America" that many American Jews view as threatening. The classic reference in this connection is Will Herberg's 1955 study, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, which presented religion as providing identity markers within a common civic piety.

The "Orthodox" and the "Fluid"

The Jewish sense of insecurity in an overwhelmingly Christian society is perfectly understandable, and perhaps even necessary, but what all these accounts have in common is the claim that Christianity in America is not threatening because it is not very Christian. The greater truth, I believe, is that Christianity has become more authentically Christian as it has, over the last half century, made great strides in theologically internalizing the abiding bond with living Judaism in obedience to the God of Israel. But that greater truth is largely lost on all but the relatively few Jewish thinkers engaged in the related dialogues and scholarship of the last fifty years.

It is a great pity, because the alternative strategy of grounding a sense of Jewish security in the hope of the evacuation or disappearance of Christianity in America is dead-ended. To put it bluntly: Most Christians do not appreciate being told by Jews that they are not really Christians, for, if they were, they would not be so friendly to Jews. That suggestion is very impolite and has, in addition, the distinct disadvantage of being false. It is precisely "orthodox" Christianity that securely grounds the bond with Jews and Judaism, and "fluid" Christianity that is, well, fluid—as in liberalism's "go with the flow." A not insignificant case in point: Are liberal or conservative Christians more solicitous of the security of Israel?

I do not wish to be too hard on Mr. Brooks. I know him as a fine fellow and he does not, after all, claim to be a scholar of American religion. But his use of the Wolfe thesis is part and parcel of the problem under discussion. Brooks has a track record as a conservative political pundit, and one can appreciate why he wants to make the argument that the Southern Baptist Convention, for instance, is "part of mainstream American culture." For readers of the *New York Times*, that gives the definition of "the mainstream" a big push to the right. Brooks, of course, is correct about where the mainstream is, if the mainstream is defined by where the American people mainly are. But I suspect Mr. Brooks is being more than a little disingenuous in his contrasting of political partisanship and religious amity. These are not two separated worlds. Brooks is, I am sure, familiar with the very substantial research showing that the most important single variable in partisan political alignments is, precisely, religion. Churchgoers are, or lean toward, the Republicans, while nonchurchgoers, the nonreligious, and the explicitly antireligious are overwhelmingly Democrats.

Mr. Brooks' liberal readers are not likely to be taken in by his ploy. They are religiously committed to the belief that they are the mainstream and their mission is to ward off the barbarians whose only claim to being the mainstream is that they constitute the great majority of the people. His farther leftward readers are only too ready to admit, indeed to proudly trumpet, that they are dissenters from "mainstream American culture," which does not detract from but only reinforces their conviction that they are anointed to govern America.

As for George Bush embracing Howard Dean at a Bible study, I'm sure he might. If Mr. Dean showed up, which seems extremely unlikely. After all, he left his local Episcopal church, which he says he seldom attended, over a dispute about a bike trail. His disputes with George Bush are somewhat more substantial than that. And, at bottom, some of those disputes probably have a good deal to do with religion. One thinks, for instance, of abortion, faith-based initiatives, the impossibility of same-sex marriage, parental choice in education, and the belief that God intends the world's people to be free, toward which end the U.S. is morally obliged to play a part, even the leading part. One may disagree with President Bush on all these questions, or agree with him, on grounds that have little or nothing to do with religion. But I do not think there is a reasonable doubt that, in the mind of George Bush, these and other questions are closely related to his understanding of what it means to be a faithful Christian. There is no reason to believe, and every reason not to believe, that Mr. Dean shares that understanding. Which would not prevent President Bush from embracing Mr. Dean as a wayward brother—giving him the benefit of the doubt as Christians are wont to do.

In sum, the Wolfe-Brooks claims about the public insignificance of religion in America are, in addition to being deeply insulting to Christians, quite implausible. Maybe Brooks' argument is better than the *Times*' usual and somewhat fanatical crusading against the dangers posed by "the religious right," but not by much. There is a measure of dignity attached to being viewed as dangerous, and none at all to being deemed innocuous. But it may be unfair to link Wolfe and Brooks so closely. Mr. Wolfe, for all his pretensions to scholarship, is simply ignorant about religion in America, while Mr. Brooks, knowing he is ignorant, makes the innocent mistake of relying on Mr.

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Wolfe. If Mr. Brooks is guilty of anything, it is probably of nothing more than being a talented social and political pundit who is sometimes too clever by half. Which, of course, brings us back to the dangers of half-truths.

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THE BISHOPS GET THEIR REPORT CARD

On January 6, as scheduled, the bishops conference (USCCB) released the first report on compliance with the Charter adopted at its Dallas meeting in June 2002. The report contains no surprises, which is itself not surprising. The same may not be true of the report card on the bishops that the National Review Board (NRB) will be issuing at the end of February. The January 6 document reads like a very long corporate memorandum, much like something Ford might issue on what it is doing to remedy brake failures in the 2000 Taurus. The media have not been able to squeeze even one juicy tidbit out of the report, which is no doubt exactly what the bishops had in mind.

With a handful of exceptions—and in those cases for reasons unexceptionable—all the dioceses and eparchies (the latter are Eastern Rite jurisdictions) cooperated fully with the "audit" conducted by an army of investigators composed mainly of former FBI agents. A few jurisdictions are mildly criticized, all received a passing grade, and "commendations" were generously bestowed on those that anticipated or went beyond the rigorous mandates of Dallas. To judge by this report, the Catholic Church is well on its way to being the squeakiest clean institution in the country when it comes to protecting minors from a friendly pat on the back, never mind sexual abuse. (Although, admittedly, the two are hard to distinguish if one employs the elastic definition of sexual abuse adopted in Dallas.) It should be noted that the report does not cover the religious orders. They have about a third of the priests in the U.S., and it is not clear when or whether they will be issuing a comparable report on compliance with the Charter. Bishops do not have jurisdiction over the religious orders, aside from deciding whether to admit them to their dioceses, just as the USCCB does not have jurisdiction over bishops. Everything depends on voluntary cooperation, although, of course, pressures can be brought to bear.

Some bishops are expressing unhappiness that the organization hired to do the audit made a slew of "recommendations" that, it is said, exceed the organization's mandate and infringe upon a bishop's authority in deciding how to do his job. This complaint would be more credible if the bishops concerned had not voted for the present process at Dallas. They knew, or should have known, that when you hire people to evaluate the job you're doing they're likely to have some ideas of their own. The unhappy fact is that, in their panic-driven actions at Dallas, the bishops declared their incompetence in governing the Church. In a damage-containment mode, they appointed from the laity *episcopoi* of the *episcopoi*, overseers to oversee the overseers. To complain now about the consequent undermining of their authority is a little like a man's seeking refuge from his creditors by declaring bankruptcy and then complaining that people think he is bankrupt.

Most of these dynamics are familiar by now, although see below on a new and important wrinkle on the role of canon law—or rather the ignoring of canon law—as a major factor in bringing about the crisis that has preoccupied the Church's leadership for the last two years. As for January 6 and the audit, it was quite predictable that "emergency" measures adopted at Dallas would become entrenched. That is the way it is with organizations and bureaucracies. Among the recommendations of the auditing organization is that there be another audit next year, and the year after that, and, most probably, on and on. As for the NRB, it is unlikely to disappear. That specific institution may have a terminal point, but the taste for, and the perceived necessity of, lay supervision of the bishops is open-ended. It may be that some bishops at Dallas consoled themselves with the thought that this, too, shall pass, that the Church thinks in terms of centuries, and so forth. With Longfellow, they may have anticipated a better time coming:

> *And the night shall be filled with music,*
> *And the cares, that infest the day,*
> *Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,*
> *And as silently steal away.*

Not very likely. The taste for and perceived necessity of lay supervision will not be denied. A mix of episcopal autocracy and episcopal laxity created the scandal, and neither the bishops who rejected any questioning of their authority nor the bishops who neglected to exercise their authority will be allowed to go back to business as usual. Which is undoubtedly a good thing. The big losers will be good bishops who understood and understand that their authority, while sacramentally bestowed, is made practically effective by holiness of example, by fatherly solicitude for and brotherly collaboration with priests and people, and by

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uncompromising fidelity to the teaching and norms of the Church they were ordained to serve. At Dallas, the good bishops, too, acquiesced in the declaration that they are bad bishops. They are not to be trusted. They must be watched carefully. That is the perception that they ratified by their votes. It is a perception that will be exploited, that is being exploited — by the media, by district attorneys, and by Catholic activists, none of whom believe that bishops are apostolically entrusted with the governance of the Church.

"Perhaps so," some bishops respond, "but what else were we to do? It was a crisis, a legal disaster, a media catastrophe. This was the plan presented to us and, despite misgivings, we went with it." What else were they to do? They might have acted like bishops of the Catholic Church instead of frightened franchise managers in a time of corporate meltdown. They might have come to Dallas on their knees, or gone into seclusion for a long period of prayer, fasting, and reflection, instead of hastily recruiting hired guns as spinmeisters and damage controllers. They might have been bishops. They might have spoken a word about sin and forgiveness, about human fragility and the call to holiness, about grace and the amendment of life. Some bishops might have voluntarily resigned as an act of penance. Instead, the bishops produced self-exculpating press releases, organizational charts promising new levels of accountability, and a one-strike-and-you're-out policy, even if it meant scapegoating priests to whom they had failed to be bishops. It was not an edifying sight. But the most damning indictment of non-leadership since the crisis broke in January 2002 is the collective failure to frame what has happened in terms of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Long before this was a legal, financial, and public relations crisis, it was—and this is infinitely more important—a spiritual and moral crisis.

In sum, the bishops let those who were in an adversarial mode—the media, the victims, their lawyers, and the prosecutors—define the nature of the crisis and what must be done about it. "Yes," it is objected, "but that was inevitable. They were playing offense and we were playing defense. If we addressed the crisis in the terms of Catholic morality and teaching, we would not have been understood and would probably have been mocked and accused of evasiveness." There is something to that objection, but I am not persuaded. There is venerable precedent for being misunderstood and mocked in the service of the Gospel. By choosing the route of damage control, they are perceived as failed managers seeking rehabilitation, not as bishops. Of course, corporate management is part of being a bishop, but it is far from the most important part. The Church is the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the People of God, not the Catholic Church, Inc. I am speaking here, please note, about the collective voice of the bishops, the USCCB. Some bishops in their dioceses have addressed the crisis in spiritual and moral terms, finding it to be an occasion for effective evangelization and re-evangelization. Others have communicated with their people through nothing more than a letter or two that might have been written, and probably were written, by their lawyers. During this Long Lent, no bishop has emerged as a nationally effective voice of Catholic truth. Perhaps that was too much to expect.

Caught by Surprise

So we await the two NRB reports at the end of February. One will be the findings of a team from John Jay College of Criminal Justice on instances of abuse—how many, who, what, when, and how they were handled—and the second will be a more evaluative report by the NRB itself probing into possible causes, patterns of misconduct in dealing with cases, and what can be done to make sure nothing like it ever happens again. Of course bad things will happen again, as they have been happening since Our Lord in his infinite wisdom entrusted the leadership of his Church to frail human beings. One of the truly strange things of the last two years is the impression that the bishops were caught by surprise. Didn't the Church have provisions in place for dealing with sexual abuse? That question is very helpfully addressed by Father John J. Coughlin in an article for the *Boston College Law Review*, "The Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis and the Spirit of Canon Law."

A Franciscan friar for twenty-five years and Professor of Law at Notre Dame University, Fr. Coughlin knows that his article "might be interpreted as critical of ecclesiastical authority," but his purpose is to contribute to the renewal of that authority. Canon law, he notes, "has always considered the sexual abuse of a minor to be a grave crime and grievous sin." As is now scandalously evident, "the failure to correct the injustice of clergy abuse through the rule of canon law aggravates the injury for all concerned, but especially for the abused minor." Canon 1389 of the 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici* "provides for a penalty, including deprivation of ecclesiastical office, for an official who abuses ecclesiastical power or who omits—through culpable negligence—to perform an act of ecclesiastical governance. A bishop who fails to employ the appropriate provisions of canon law in a case of sexual abuse of a minor is liable to penal sanctions imposed by the Holy See." The undisputed fact is that many bishops failed to follow canon law in dealing with

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cases of priestly sexual abuse, typically with males of high school age. In such cases, as well as in instances of coerced sex or open concubinage with a woman, canon law provides serious penalties, including permanent removal from the clerical state. Why did so many bishops not follow canon law during the 1970s and '80s, the period when most of the sexual abuse was happening? Fr. Coughlin writes, "I am unaware of a single case in the United States during the past several decades in which a priest was dismissed from the clerical state as a result of the diocesan penal process stipulated in canon law."

The history of the Church, Coughlin notes, displays periods of both legalism and antinomianism. The latter "so emphasizes faith alone that it excludes the correct function of the moral law in the economy of salvation." When antinomianism holds sway, the very fact and idea of canon law is viewed as legalistic. Following Coughlin's analysis, we see how the laxity encouraged by an antinomian atmosphere results in the countenancing of sinful and criminal behavior which, in turn, produces a legalistic reaction. Thus the hyperlegalism of the measures adopted at Dallas in June 2002. While the oscillation between legalism and laxity and back again is not new in the experience of the Church, this time it was intensified by the decision of the Second Vatican Council to revise the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Coughlin writes, "Over the course of almost three decades of revision, the 1917 Code, although theoretically still the universal law of the Church, fell into general disuse. It was in many instances abrogated in favor of postconciliar innovations *ad experimentum*. In retrospect, the ecclesial ambiance in the wake of Vatican II represented a swing of the pendulum from the preconciliar legalism toward the antinomian."

In many instances, those who pitted the "spirit" of the Council against what the Council actually said undermined the very validity of canon law. Clear law was frequently flouted, Coughlin notes, in the great increase in the number of marriage annulments and in the reckless "alienation" of church property, the latter resulting in the loss of major Catholic educational and health care institutions. "Unfortunately, the negligence of church authorities in the United States in each of these broad areas of justice seems consistent with the failure to address cases of sexual abuse of minors during the last four decades." There was yet another factor. As allegations of sexual abuse greatly increased, "the bishops opted for a therapeutic approach to the exclusion of correcting the grave injury through the rule of canon law." At the time, psychologists and other professionals believed that sexual predators could be rehabilitated with proper treatment, and the bishops went along. They were not acting in malice, Coughlin underscores, but, having set canon law aside, followed what they were told was the best professional advice. Moreover, according to the psychological model, offenders were deemed to possess "diminished capacity" to control their impulses, which made the penalties prescribed by canon law seem inappropriate.

Reaping the Whirlwind

During these years, the Holy See repeatedly called on the U.S. bishops to follow the norms of canon law. "Despite the various authoritative calls to confront the problem," writes Coughlin, "more than a few bishops failed to afford a just legal process when dealing with accusations. When the psychological model replaced the canonical order, the conditions were set for great damage to individuals and the common good." To further compound the problem, the psychological model blurred the line between the "internal forum" and the "external forum." Matters of conscience, as in the confessional, are internal, while matters of governance are external, which means they are public and verifiable. Coughlin writes, "A credible accusation of the sexual abuse of a minor officially reported to an ecclesiastical authority clearly belongs to the external forum. The exclusive reliance on the psychological model, however, tended to create the impression of secrecy and cover-up." The scandal would not have flared as it did without the widespread appearance of secrecy and cover-up. Under the immense pressures of the public scandal, says Coughlin, "the bishops elected to correct the decades-long absence of canonical response with a rule of strict criminal liability."

This paragraph deserves to be quoted in full:

> Law hastily framed runs the risk of abrogating any semblance of fundamental fairness and justice. In the months following the formulation of the Dallas policy, it was not uncommon for a priest with a single allegation against him, which was placed in his diocesan personnel file twenty or more years ago, to be summarily dismissed from an active and fruitful ministry. Following years of faithful service, the priest suddenly found himself deprived of his life's work and with his reputation irreparably damaged. Placed on indefinite administrative leave without adequate notice or opportunity to be heard, he received the same penalty as a serial child abuser. The implementation of the zero-tolerance approach in certain instances stunned priests and their parishioners and caused attorneys for the accused to raise questions about a lack of fundamental due process.

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The denial of an opportunity to be heard and offer a defense, the absence of proportionality in penalties, and the retroactive application of law are issues that, in both civil and canon law, pertain to the fundamental human rights of an accused person. "The lack of concern to frame a fair and just policy that protects the rights of the accused displayed a strange combination of both antinomian and legalistic approaches. On the one hand, the bishops seemed simply to ignore many of the requirements of the natural law expressed in canon law. On the other hand, the bishops adopted an absolute rule that permitted little or no discretion." In short, reaping the whirlwind of decades of negligence in not following the canon law that they were pledged to uphold, the bishops reacted by imposing a legalistic regime that is equally in violation of the canon law by which the Church's life is to be ordered.

The result has deeply damaged what it means to be a bishop. Canon law says a bishop is to govern with "holiness, charity, humility, and simplicity of life." Coughlin writes, "Although many bishops undoubtedly exemplify holiness of life, the bishops as a whole have not conveyed that inner harmony of life as a characteristic of their approach to canon law in cases of clergy abuse. . . . Given their collective failure with regard to the rule of canon law, the bishops have now found it necessary to surrender their discretion for the zero-tolerance rule." Moreover, the bishops have severely compromised the Church's right to govern itself. "On the basis of two millennia of its historical development, the Church proclaims itself as an organic reality with juridical manifestations for the purpose of proclaiming salvation. During this long history, its canon law has been shaped by the Church's supreme law, which remains the salvation of souls. . . . The secular order aims to establish a set of societal conditions that maximize the opportunity for material well-being and prosperity. Canon law, however, seeks to create the optimal conditions for salvation through the proclamation of conversion, forgiveness, and penance." Put very directly, by surrendering crucial aspects of their governance to secular authorities, bishops have compromised not only canon law and the freedom of the Church but have compromised the mission for which they exist—namely, the salvation of souls.

Fr. Coughlin writes, "An antinomian approach to ecclesiastical governance only reinforces the perception that church authorities lack the resolve to protect children. Legalism, in contrast, communicates to priests and all the baptized that the internal order of the Church lacks justice as a result of the disrespect of fundamental rights." "No law or policy can eradicate sin from the fallen nature of the human situation, including that of the human beings who comprise the priesthood." The Church has known that for many centuries, and made ample provision in canon law for dealing with that circumstance. It is hard to disagree with Fr. Coughlin's conclusion: "If bishops had fulfilled their duty to abide by the rule of law, especially in cases involving serial abusers, there probably would have been no crisis."

Complexifications

There are some who persist in denying it, but it seems to be generally recognized now that this Long Lent (which is not yet over) was brought on by a widespread failure of fidelity. The de facto suspension of canon law's provisions for dealing with abuse was, as Fr. Coughlin persuasively explains, occasioned in part by the false assumption that the 1917 code was in abeyance until the 1983 revised code came into effect. Behind that, however, was a growing belief, reinforced by what Philip Rieff aptly called "the triumph of the therapeutic," that canon law, and indeed law itself, is in conflict with a "loving," "pastoral," and "evangelical" approach to human failures. Fr. Coughlin does not exaggerate in describing the resulting atmosphere and the episcopal negligence it fostered as "antinomian." Faced with the massive public embarrassment, along with the financial and legal consequences of their negligence, the bishops at Dallas reacted in panic by imposing a legalistic regime that entails frequently unjust penalties for priests while protecting the bishops whose failure to do their duty created the crisis in the first place. As aforesaid, it is not an edifying spectacle.

The abrogation of canon law described by Coughlin was one important factor in creating an ecclesiastical climate of "wink and nudge" that lasted for decades. Other factors are by now well known: the misunderstanding of the Council's call for *aggiornamento* as a mandate to embrace a culture that was in the 1960s in a state of terminal disintegration; seminary education encouraging the belief that in "the post–Vatican II Church" teachings and practices were up for grabs, and that vows, with most specific reference to the vow of celibacy, were made conditional by anticipated changes in the "status quo"; the widespread "openness" to homosexuals and assertive gays, resulting in "lavender" influence and sometimes control in seminaries and chanceries; and, undergirding and driving all of these deformations, the conviction that "the American Church" was pioneering a new and more authentic Catholicism against the "authoritarian" opposition of Rome.

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There are no doubt many causes of the scandal of sexual abuse and the further scandal of the bishops' response to the scandal. As it is said, "The matter is very complex." The NRB has consulted with many experts, a breed prone to proving that they are experts by multiplying complexifications of the inconveniently obvious. One must hope that, and I think there is reason to believe that, the members of the NRB will not be taken in. I was from the first opposed to the creation of *episcopoi* of the *episcopoi*, but since we have them, pray their report will speak clearly and candidly to what happened and why, pointing the way toward—in the words of the Holy Father in April 2002—"a holier episcopate, a holier priesthood, a holier Church."

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Coalitions are almost always a dicey business. They are task-specific, as it is said, meaning that you work together with individuals and organizations that are joined by that specific task but disagree on much else. I am on the advisory board of Alliance for Marriage (AFM), a prime mover in defending marriage from same-sex agitations. Some of you have written in response to Internet attacks on AFM because its coalition includes—in addition to a wide array of Jewish, Christian, and ethnic organizations—the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Reckless charges have been made that ISNA is a terrorist organization or supporter of terrorist organizations. To the best of my knowledge, that is not true. The U.S. government and experts on Islamic organizations in the U.S. say it is not true. (For details, see the website of AFM: *www.allianceformarriage.org*.) Longtime readers know that this journal has no illusions about Islam being "a religion of peace," or about the ease with which Muslims can be assimilated in this and other Western societies. Indeed, we have been the object of vicious attacks by one prominent Muslim organization that accuses us of "anti-Muslim bigotry." It is probably true that ISNA is only a few degrees of separation from other Muslims who support terrorism. That is almost inevitable. We should work, here and abroad, to cultivate connections with Muslims who evidence an interest in supporting the peaceful and democratic directions that are in our mutual interest. Again, AFM is a task-specific coalition and ISNA is supportive of that task. I know I have deep disagreements with ISNA religiously and also, I expect, politically, especially with respect to the politics of the Middle East. But those are for another day and another forum. The task at hand is the defense of marriage. Toward that end, and until somebody comes up with compelling reasons that persuade me to the contrary, I welcome the help of the Islamic Society of North America.

■ Strange bedfellows, I thought at first, but perhaps not. The French interior minister visited Cairo and received a blessing, so to speak, from the grand sheik of Al Azhar, the prestigious center of Sunni Islamic learning, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi. He said he had no problem with the decision of the Chirac government to ban the wearing of the head scarf, or *hijab*. The prohibition is required, Chirac explains, by the French devotion to secularism, which they call *la laïcité*. The grand sheik appreciates such devotion. "If a Muslim woman observes the laws of a non-Muslim state," he explained, "then from the point of view of Islamic law, she has the status of acting under coercion." The French minister thanked the grand sheik for his understanding, and told his Egyptian audience that the law did not single out Muslims, since it also banned the public wearing of yarmulkes by Jews and "large" crosses by Christians. Oh well, that's all right then. "There are no rights without duties," he said, "and if the Muslims of France have the same rights as other believers, they have the same duties." In fact, it would seem, rights and duties are synonymous: everyone has the right not to wear religious symbols and everyone has the duty not to wear religious symbols. The grand sheik is in warm agreement with the French understanding of religious freedom: "Just as I do not allow non-Muslims to interfere in my affairs as a Muslim, at the same time I do not permit myself to interfere in the affairs of non-Muslims." If non-Muslim states want to forbid Muslims to wear the hijab, that is their business, so long as they recognize that it is none of their business when Muslim states forbid non-Muslims to engage in public worship or share their faith with Muslims, the punishment for a Muslim who converts to another faith being death. Admittedly, the French prohibitions and attendant penalties are somewhat less severe, but the principle is the same: Freedom of religion means the freedom of the government to control religion.

■ Recall Snoopy of *Peanuts* fame sitting atop his doghouse typing out, "It was a dark and stormy night. . . ." San Jose State University in California has an annual "Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest," in which entrants (from all over the world) are chal-

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lenged to compose the worst opening sentence of an imaginary novel. The first sentence of Baron Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1830 novel *Paul Clifford* was this: "It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness." Michel Faber of Fearn Station House, Rossshire, England, doesn't claim it's great but he protests that it is far from the worst opening sentence of a novel. "In truth," he writes, "if the opening sentence of the prelude to *Middlemarch* ("Who that cares much to know the history of man," etc.) had been subjected to the same sustained ridicule, the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest might have been the George Eliot Fiction Contest instead." He has more than a point, and I can easily picture Snoopy typing, "Who that cares much to know the history of man. . . ." Imagine what fun Lucy would have had with that.

■ In the October 2003 issue I commented on a number of pundits who complain about an alleged cabal of Jewish neoconservatives who have an excessive influence on U.S. foreign policy. Among those mentioned was William Pfaff of the *International Herald Tribune*. That was a mistake. Mr. Pfaff points out that, while he has been strenuously critical of neoconservative influence, he has not made an issue of the fact that many neoconservatives are Jewish, nor does he think it should be an issue. I am grateful for the correction.

■ "It hurts me when people say the *Tablet* is not really orthodox because it has always seemed to me that orthodoxy is the most daring and exciting thing there is." So said *Tablet* editor John Wilkins upon receiving a papal knighthood at a convivial London ceremony attended by Archbishop Pablo Puente, the papal nuncio, and Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. "The *Tablet*," Wilkins continued, "under both my editorship and that of my predecessor, Tom Burns, has been engaged in the search for true orthodoxy. It is so encouraging to have this recognition from the Holy See." There is little likelihood that a papal knighthood is in the works for, say, Father Joseph Fessio, founder of Ignatius Press. That would be very controversial. Fr. Fessio is not engaged in the search for true orthodoxy. He thinks he has pretty much found it in the teaching of the Church. The *Tablet* has over the years been unflagging in its support for contraception, the ordination of women, and the moral acceptance of homosexuality, among other deviations from Catholic teaching. No matter. The papal nuncio described the *Tablet* as "a living laboratory of the marvelous reality that is the prophetic mission of the laity in the Church." He went on to say, "Dear Mr. Wilkins, thank you for your work. Thank you for your search for ideas and new paths. Thank you for presenting us with new aspects of old themes. Thank you for encouraging us to deepen our thinking," and so forth. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor smilingly asked, "What shall I say about John Wilkins?" My question exactly. But he then went on to praise Mr. Wilkins' "critical loyalty," and so forth. Mr. Wilkins was made a Knight of the Equestrian Order of Pope Saint Sylvester I, an honor created by Pope Gregory XVI in 1841 and conferred in recognition of particular service to the Church. It does not come with a horse. According to venerable legend, Pope Sylvester (314-335) baptized the Emperor Constantine. My own view is that what is called Constantinianism was not entirely a bad thing. But those who think the word refers to the Church's fatal accommodation to the establishment culture may see a certain fitness in the Pope Sylvester honor being given to Mr. Wilkins and the *Tablet*. Truth to tell, I know John Wilkins and he is a generally pleasant fellow, albeit a very confused Catholic. And judging by the papal nuncio's remarks, one can well understand how he might have the impression that Mr. Wilkins and the *Tablet* have deepened his thinking.

■ Michael Lindsay writes that he is amused when he drives along Forty-Sixth Street in Minneapolis and sees the sign pointing to Faith Free Lutheran Church. I checked out the church's website and it seems they're firmly committed to the "solas" of Scripture and grace. So that's two out of three. Lutherans are not perfectionists, after all.

■ Progress is a jealous god. Upon being the first Episcopal bishop to ordain a lesbian, the late Paul Moore declared that, whenever he was faced with a difficult moral decision, he chose change, the way of the future. Albert R. Hunt begins his *Wall Street Journal* column with, "I am a convert to accepting gay marriages." He says he was uncomfortable with the idea at first. "But times are changing. When I asked my seventeen-year-old son if he supported gay marriage, he shrugged and replied, 'Sure. What's the big deal?'" After having done his homework on the subject, Hunt goes on to echo Andrew Sullivan's usual talking points, but the clinching argument is that "younger Americans are not encumbered with many of the hang-ups and prejudices of their elders;

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the tide is with change." And if you are not convinced by that, there is the fact that gay marriage has about it "a sense of ultimate inevitability." Well, there you are. Hunt acknowledges that the great majority of Americans are against gay marriage and a majority appears to favor a constitutional amendment to preclude it, but that only means he is among the elect of those who are ahead of their time. "The times are changing." "The tide is with change." Some things never change.

■ "Thomistic" has never been the word to describe American culture, writes Christopher Lynch in the *Weekly Standard*, and he's surely right about that. Unless, of course, one believes, as some of my friends who are Thomists of the Strict Observance do believe, that all serious human thought returns of necessity, no matter how circuitous the route, to the font of wisdom that is St. Thomas. Mr. Lynch's observation is occasioned by his review of three books on just war doctrine. "At the peak of the agitation before the invasion of Iraq, one could hardly pick up a newspaper without finding the distinction between *jus ad bellum*, justice in the reasons for going to war, and *jus in bello*, justice in the means used during a war, deployed somewhere on the op-ed page." That's an exaggeration, but not by much. Lynch agrees with Jean Bethke Elshtain, who writes in her fine book *Just War Against Terror*—a book that in these pages was given rough treatment by Stanley Hauerwas and Paul Griffiths, but was ably defended by Professor Elshtain and many others (see October 2003; and Correspondence, January 2004)—that American public discourse about war has dramatically changed in the last few decades. John Courtney Murray complained forty years ago about the American tendency to assume there is no evil as long as there is peace, and no morality as soon as there is war. That was changed by long second thoughts about the terror bombing of Germany and Japan in World War II, by the monstrous logic of "mutually assured destruction" during the Cold War, and, of course, by the Vietnam experience. Today, people on all sides of disputes about particular military actions agree that distinctions must be made. And after they had been long ago consigned to the museum of medieval curiosities, the distinctions proposed by St. Thomas in the thirteenth century and, before him, by St. Augustine in the fifth suddenly seemed particularly pertinent to the twenty-first. Mr. Lynch's conclusion seems warranted: "Much remains to be done before America fully internalizes the canons of just war, but popular punditry's now-routine use of the theory and the flood of recent books on the topic suggest that a change in the nation's thinking has taken place." Or at least is taking place. It is to be feared that for many Americans it is still the case that there is no evil as long as there is peace and no morality as soon as there is war.

■ I recently referred to "Christian Zionists" and readers protested what they took to be a slur. Far from it. Google "Christian Zionism" and up pop nearly a hundred thousand results. That's what they call themselves. They are mainly evangelical/fundamentalist/charismatic (the terminology is slippery) Christians who believe that the Jewish state in the Middle East is part of God's plan, whether historical and long-term or apocalyptic and imminent. Many Jews, both here and in Israel, have come to believe that Christian Zionists are their most solid base of support in this country, even more important than "the Jewish lobby." This is frequently in tension with a more secularized Jewish contempt for anything associated with "the religious right," of which most Christian Zionists are part. Irving Kristol has, in typically pithy fashion, indicated why he thinks Jews should welcome the support of Christian Zionists: "It's their theology. It's our Israel." A fascinating overview of these matters is available in the form of a published conversation from the Washington-based Ethics and Public Policy Center, "Evangelicals and Israel." Gerald McDermott of Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, is not a Christian Zionist, but in his paper he traces the deep evangelical roots of sympathy for the Jewish people and their claim to the land. While Enlightenment philosophers dismissed Judaism as a fossil and more liberal Christians displayed Marcionite tendencies to displace totally the old covenant with the new, evangelical thinkers, including the great Jonathan Edwards, continued to take very seriously the prophecies, people, and land of biblical promise. Israel today, says McDermott, continues to be good for Christians: "In sum, the Christian population of Israel, not including the West Bank and Gaza, rose in absolute terms from 34,000 in 1948 to nearly 180,000 in 1998—a sixfold increase. When Christians in the West Bank (42,000) and Gaza (9,000) are added, the total is 230,000 in 2000. In Israel, the percentage of Christians in the population is virtually the same after fifty years of Israel's existence. So while the Christian population in the Middle East as a whole is declining because of Muslim persecution, the number of Christians in the state of Israel has risen." Other participants in the discussion take a less benign view of Israel, noting the mistreatment of Palestinians and underscoring that the biblical promises of the land to Israel were contingent

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upon the doing of justice, especially to non-Jews. It appears that many non-Zionist Christians who are supportive of Israel are increasingly insistent that Israel cannot be given a blank check for doing "whatever is necessary" to enforce Israeli policies, as "whatever is necessary" is defined by extremists in Israel and their more enthusiastic Christian supporters here. This is notably true with respect to settlements in Palestinian territory. For a copy of the twenty-five-page conversation, "Evangelicals and Israel," write EPPC at 1015 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

■ The Orthodox Churches, led by the patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople and followed by bishops of various jurisdictions in this country, have been particularly outspoken in opposing U.S. policy in Iraq and in the Middle East more generally. What is called a firestorm of protest from lay people was generated by a petition circulated by the Orthodox Peace Fellowship which said that casualties in the Iraq war "could only be regarded as murder." Writing in *Touchstone*, Patrick Reardon attributes Orthodox attitudes to the exigencies of having to coexist with Islam in various parts of the world and a long-standing Orthodox fear of the growth of Western and non-Orthodox power. He fears that an Orthodoxy "committed to an ethics of pacifism will remain forever on the fringes of American life, along with other pacifist groups, like the Amish." That might be a worry in America, but in most other places, notably Russia, Orthodoxy is inextricably entangled with state interests and, as in Serbia, shows slight inclination toward pacifism.

■ It is a great pity, but most of us don't know what to do about it, aside from observing that it is a great pity. William Dalrymple has written *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East*, and in the *New York Review of Books* he discusses another book on the same subject, Charles M. Sennott's *The Body and the Blood: The Middle East's Vanishing Christians and the Possibility for Peace*. Some years ago, Robert Louis Wilken wrote in *The Land Called Holy* about the prospect of "the first Christians" becoming historical curiosities, and the sacred places of Christianity's birth being turned into museums. The discussion of the besieged and declining Christian population of the Middle East is inextricably entangled with the seemingly intractable politics of the region. Dalrymple, like most other writers on the subject, places the burden of responsibility upon Israel and what they depict as its brutal occupation of Palestinian territory. A careful look at the map with the settlements occupied by more than 200,000 Israelis, and the unlikelihood of any Israeli government dismantling the bulk of them, make it very hard to envision what would be the Palestinian part of the currently proposed "two-state solution." Also in the *New York Review*, Tony Judt recently prompted a heated discussion by suggesting it is time to consider alternatives, such as Israel's outright incorporation of the occupied territories. But in such a unified state the Arabs would soon be a majority, which would mean that Israel might in that case decide not to be a democracy, becoming a frankly apartheid society. The unofficial Geneva Accords negotiated last year have received warm support from many in the U.S. foreign affairs establishment, and have even elicited a few words of sympathy from the Bush administration, but are heatedly dismissed by defenders of current Israeli policy. A professor friend says he has a list of problems on which he does not even pretend to have a useful opinion. He calls it his "Northern Ireland List," and the first problem on the list, he says, is the Middle East. Why doesn't he call it his Middle East List? "Because," he says, "I don't want to be controversial about my uselessness." I expect that is where many people are, except if one lives in the Irish Bronx where it would be exceedingly controversial to have a Northern Ireland List. But back to Dalrymple and the Christians of the Middle East. He talks to Nadim Khoury, a Christian who returned home to Palestine at the time of the 1993 Oslo Accords and set up a successful business that has now been destroyed by the restrictions of the Israeli occupation. "There is no question of going back to Boston," Mr. Khoury says. "You just have to hope. Every day I pray to Saint George. It's too late to give up." It's too late to give up. That gives new meaning to the phrase hoping against hope.

■ Presidents are usually not philosophers, which is probably just as well. And yet James W. Ceaser of the University of Virginia writes, "in their responsibility to act, it happens that their words sometimes open a dimension of theoretical insight that more abstract thought misses." Consider the idea of history (often with an uppercase H). Once upon a time in America, the left was confident that history was on the side of Progress. Then in the 1960s came the New Left, which was certain that history, or at least American history, was all downhill. Then came Ronald Reagan, an inveterate optimist. Grover Norquist, orchestrator of things conservative, declared, "From Ronald Reagan, conservatives have learned optimism and discovered they are on the winning side of history." George W. Bush, too, speaks with a certain confidence about

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history, but with a strong accent on Providence. Ceaser writes: "Providence is one of the richest and most complex—and therefore one of the most variously interpreted—of all religious ideas. For many, of course, the mere mention of a religious term is sufficient to provoke Pavlovian accusations of political messianism; any idea of religious pedigree (other than the message of peace) is devoid of all sense. Yet those willing to consider the matter more deeply will find that traditionally, Providence has had a reasonably determinate meaning. One of its central themes is that the course of history, from a human standpoint, is unfathomable: 'The Almighty has His own purposes.' One conviction, however, remains supreme: While the path of events before us can never be fully known, and while there will always be difficulty and pain, Providence offers a basis for hope and a ground for avoiding despair. Yet it disclaims any pretension to know the future and offers no assurance of divine reward for our action in this world. At the practical level of human affairs, the focus remains on human responsibility and choice. The most sublime evocation of the 'providence of God' in political rhetoric appears as the central theme of Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural. This speech carries a message of ultimate hope without any guarantee of immediate reward. It keeps the focus in the political realm on duty, on the need to do right 'as God gives us to see the right.' These aspects of this great speech are well known, but less known, perhaps, are two other things. The first is that Lincoln's recourse to Providence was a response to the nineteenth-century precursor to the Doctrine of History that had circulated before the war and that taught, in the words of the historian George Bancroft, that 'everything is in motion for the better . . . . The last political state of the world likewise is ever more excellent than the old.' Standing where he did in 1865, after experiencing all of the agony and turns of fortune of the Civil War, Lincoln had come to know the centrality of political choice and to experience pathos. The second thing was that no sooner did Lincoln give the speech than he was widely criticized for not invoking God more directly on his side and for not promising a swift and certain reward. In one of his last letters, Lincoln explained that such a wish was contrary to the idea of Providence and unsuited to the education of a great people." In his 2003 State of the Union address, George W. Bush declared, "We do not know—we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history." Ceaser concludes, "Perhaps this language, suitably developed and elaborated, provides the best framework for conservatives both to express and reconcile their hopes and fears about history." I'll second that, with the amendment that it applies to liberals and everyone else as well. Ultimately—and we must ever keep the ultimate immediately in mind and soul—the "winning side of history" is not determined by political or ideological allegiances.

■ I don't mean to pick on Wesley Clark. On this question there is no substantive difference between him and other politicians who strive to prove their impeccable pro-abortion credentials. But the language is different. "I'm not going to be appointing judges who are pro-life," he told the *Manchester Union Leader*. One imagines an aide whispering, "Our people do not say 'pro-life,' General." Clark also told the paper, "Until the moment of birth, the government has no right to influence a mother's decision on whether to have an abortion." That would seem to go beyond *Roe v. Wade*, which allows that there is a government interest in unborn life, at least in its later stages, if the mother has no "health" reason for wanting an abortion, which includes psychological health, which means she has a right to an abortion if she would be distressed by not having an abortion. Again, the difference is not substantive, but the general's language is strikingly blunt. Then, on the allegedly complex but obviously obvious question of when life begins, the general accepts the price of medical and metaphysical incoherence in order to win the Most Candid Candidate Award. He says, "Life begins with the mother's decision." (Unless, presumably, she later decides to have the child killed.) Clark's statement does have the quasi-Cartesian clarity that drives the pro-abortion movement, even if most of them hesitate to put it so unequivocally: I decide this is not a human life; ergo this is not a human life. More generally stated: I think it is not; ergo it is not. The principle has breathtakingly large potential for the alleviation of inconvenient reality. Yes, there is a price to be paid, but is sanity really so important?

■ "All citizens have the right and responsibility to contribute to the common good through the payment of taxes," declares a new statement by the Catholic bishops of Iowa. The bishops go on to say that "taxes should be based on one's ability to pay." (That used to be called progressive taxation.) Further, the bishops say, "From those to whom much has been given, much should be expected." I may be wrong about this, but I think Our Lord was speaking about what God expected, not what the government expected. The bishops do not dismiss corporal works of mercy, voluntarism, and giving to church-related

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programs that help the needy. "Works of charity will always be a personal responsibility for Christians. But private charities cannot substitute for what the public sector can do through the just collection and distribution of tax monies." No matter how much public good faith-based efforts may do, the government, we are given to understand, has a monopoly on "the public sector." The bishops' statement brings back warm memories of seminary days when we were taught that charity must give way to justice, that voluntary initiatives were but stopgap measures until we created a just society in which government would attend to all human needs. So much has happened since then: the mediating institutions revolution, the communitarian movement, the discovery of "social capital," the end of the socialist dream, Reaganomics, supply-side economics, the Clinton welfare reforms, faith-based initiatives, the teachings of John Paul II on the free society, and on and on. Along with fond memories, the bishops' statement stirs a measure of envy. In a world of rapid and often troubling change, what bliss it must be to teach social doctrine in Iowa.

■ I have occasionally observed that one need not have to choose between being a thug or a wimp. This item is equal time for another view, offered by Theo Hobson of 63 Lothrop Street, London W10 in a letter to the *TLS*: "Sir, Rowan Williams (July 4) peddles the modish notion that secularism is disguised tyranny. He warns of 'the unspoken violence of the anything but neutral secular sphere.' And he insists that the 'claim of religious truth over and against [secularism] is not, as the anxious contemporary unbeliever assumes it must be, a bid for control.' As an anxious believer, I find this complacent. Is there no attempt by the papacy, or the Ayatollah, or indeed the Anglican Evangelicals, to control social morality? He concludes: 'The Church is therefore neither an amiable commentator on the margins of public life, superfluous and ceremonial . . . nor a theocratic bully.' Alas, the evidence suggests that it is the former when it is prevented (by secularism) from being the latter."

■ A while back, I noted that in Germany death is becoming increasingly anonymous: no notice in the papers, no church funeral, no memorial service, no nothing. As though the deceased had never been. In *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, Mary Roach reports on ways the remains are being put to use in Europe. In Sweden, for example, an entrepreneur heads a company named Promessa, which wants to replace cremation with a system of organic human composting. Corpses are lowered into liquid nitrogen, frozen, then shattered into small pieces by ultrasound waves, freeze-dried, and used as compost. The reviewer in the *TLS* comments, "*Stiff's* commercial success in the United States is surely a symptom of cultural sickness." That may well be the case, but it seems we're reading about it while they're doing it.

■ *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? The question of who will watch the watchdogs is as perennial as it is important. *Religion in the News*, published by an institute at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, keeps an eye on how the media handle big religion stories, and is, more often than not, fairly reliable. But then there is a big article, "The Anglican Crackup," by Frank Kirkpatrick, who is himself an Episcopal priest teaching religion at Trinity. "Throughout the story," he writes, "American journalists for the most part handled the conflict [over consecrating as bishop the Rev. Gene Robinson, who divorced his wife in order to live with another man] with a high degree of fairness, paying respectful attention to both sides without a lot of spin in one direction or the other. But their grasp of the underlying doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues was less than impressive." Readers may be less than impressed with Mr. Kirkpatrick's grasp, beginning with his reference to a nonexistent worldwide "Episcopal Communion." As for spin, we are told that the Episcopal Church "scrupulously followed its practice of deferring to the autonomy of dioceses and ratified Robinson's selection." In this spin, those who approved the consecration are the real traditionalists. They were only following venerable precedent, and doing so scrupulously. The statement of the October summit meeting of primates convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury was, we are told, "alternatively interpreted as slapping American wrists or simply stating the facts." Not quite. The statement—which was, curiously enough, signed also by Frank Griswold of the Episcopal Church USA—clearly warned that, if the consecration proceeded, "we would have to conclude that the future of the communion itself is in jeopardy." From there the Kirkpatrick article descends into the now tediously familiar assertions about the "genetic orientation" to homosexuality, and how biblical condemnations can be set aside because "the Bible knew nothing about what is now understood as consensual sex between two men and two women." St. Paul writes in Romans 1: "Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error." What St. Paul is describing might strike some readers as entirely

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consensual, indeed passionately so. It would seem to cover also what today are called long-term committed relationships. It seems, after all, that they "gave up" women altogether in order to sexually service one another. But Mr. Kirkpatrick reminds us the Bible is "still a human document, bearing the marks of the culture in which it was written and that, as a result, it cannot be transported uncritically into the present." Transportation difficulties aside, most people have access to a copy and can see that what it calls a very bad thing the gay rights movement calls a very good thing. Ah yes, pounces Mr. Kirkpatrick, but the so-called orthodox "evade hermeneutic challenges of their own." "How," he triumphantly asks, "do they handle biblical passages that seem to condone slavery, polygamy, or the treatment of women as property?" A modest grasp of church history amply answers that question. But then Mr. Kirkpatrick comes up with an argument that has the merit of novelty, at least as stated so starkly: Anglicanism "has long claimed to be bound by doctrinal orthodoxy as found in the historic Christian creeds, but it has never asserted an explicit *moral* orthodoxy." Ah well, that does make things easier, doesn't it? Being a disciple is a matter of what you say, not what you do. As Jesus did not say in John 14, "If you love me, you need not keep my commandments." But as Mr. Kirkpatrick helpfully points out, Jesus didn't say anything explicitly about homosexuality, and silence denotes consent. Or is that an instance of uncritically transporting a legal principle in order to meet one's hermeneutical challenges? Never mind; we are assured by *Religion in the News*, watchdog of media watchdogs that, on the controversy over homosexuality and religion, "American journalists for the most part handled the conflict with a high degree of fairness."

■ My habitual and irrepressible impulse to be fair prompts me to make also a favorable comment on *Religion in the News*. A recent issue includes a special supplement on "Religion in the 2004 Election" that contains in summary form useful information on "the religion variable" in partisan alignments. There are sections on various religious segments, and the one on "Mainline Protestants" is written by Laura Olson of Clemson University and author of *Christian Clergy in American Politics*. She notes that "these denominations have been in numeric decline since the 1950s." She then writes, "Some cynics like to call mainline Protestants 'oldline Protestants.'" Me, a cynic? Ouch. She cites a study that shows that "the most committed mainline Protestants, the attenders, are quite Republican and very, very pro-military, which suggests that Bush is going to get their vote, maybe even more so because of the war." Then we are told, "Mainline leaders, if they attract media attention and if they work in coalition with left-wing groups, could help shape the public agenda, even if they're not reaching people in the pews." She closes with this: "Finally, many of them are elderly. Many want to make sure that Social Security is protected and might like to see a prescription drug benefit added to Medicare." It all sounds very "oldline" to me. (And, unless I've missed something, I think George Bush has stolen the prescription drug benefit card from the political deck.)

■ I am told that Elaine Pagels' *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* is upsetting many Christians. No doubt, but I expect many others are aglow with Pagels' flattery of their unbelievably wonderful selves. The Gnostic message of Thomas teaches us that we all have this marvelous spark of divinity that Jesus, a really admirable human being, encouraged us to trust in seeking our own truth on the way to salvation. But then, don't you know, along came power-hungry bishops who, in cahoots with the likes of Emperor Constantine, exploited the Gospel of John—which had all those exclusive ideas about Jesus being God and the only way to salvation—in order to turn the ever-so-nice Jesus movement into an authoritarian religion with creeds that had to be believed (hence *Beyond Belief*). According to Gary A. Anderson of Notre Dame University, Pagels gets the Gnostics as wrong as she gets the early Christians. "If the White Queen bragged that she could believe six impossible things before breakfast," writes Anderson in the *Weekly Standard*, "the Gnostic adepts would need to multiply that by a factor of four, at least. Why Pagels happily swallows this camel while straining out the gnats of the creed is a mystery." If you're thinking about reading the book, Professor Anderson has some advice: "In sum, what we have in Elaine Pagels' *Beyond Belief* is a well-written account of why one educated woman finds herself unable to recite the creeds today—and why the Gnostics, rather than the orthodox early Christians, seem to her closer to the typical feelings of a twenty-first-century college professor. My own advice to the prospective reader would be to read a précis of the Gnostic myth and recite its cosmology six times before breakfast. If this sits well with you, then proceed deeper. Most, however, will find the challenge beyond belief."

■ Perhaps this is the time to address, once again, our policy in accepting ads. An outraged reader protests our carrying an ad for Hans Küng's *My Struggle for Freedom: Memoir*. We already said that we think it's

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an awful book (see December 2003). Would we carry an ad for the abovementioned *Beyond Belief*? Probably, although I'm told none has been submitted. Chesterton went too far in saying that all of morality is a matter of drawing lines, but a good deal of moral judgment is that. We would not, for example, accept an ad for a book claiming that all Protestants are going to Hell, or that the Pope is the Antichrist, or that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the truth about Jews. But, within limits, we carry ads also for wrongheaded books, including those critically reviewed in these pages. Publishers promote, we evaluate, and the discriminating reader understands the division of labor.

■ Here's a helpfully wide-ranging symposium on patriotism in *Society*. Wilfred McClay of the University of Tennessee, a member of our editorial board, discusses the genius of what he calls "mixed patriotism" in the American experience. Drawing on Burke and, most especially, on Tocqueville, he argues that patriotism in America has not traditionally been a zero-sum contest between the particular and the universal. Here is where contemporary cosmopolitans get it wrong, says McClay. He cites the philosopher Martha Nussbaum's influential 1995 essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in which Nussbaum asserts, "'I believe . . . patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve—for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality. These goals, I shall argue, would be better served by an ideal that is in any case more adequate to our situation in the contemporary world, namely the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings.' Nussbaum offers as a heroic exemplar the figure of Diogenes the Cynic, who was said to have answered anyone who asked what city-state he came from by declaring, 'I am a citizen of the world.' He heroically declined, Nussbaum says, to be identified with the accidents of birth, 'his local origins and group memberships, so central to the self-image of the conventional Greek male; instead, he defined himself in terms of more universal aspirations and concerns.' We are urged to do the same, and to educate our children along similar lines. But as Lee Harris has recently pointed out, the historical evidence suggests that Diogenes consented to be a citizen 'only of a nonexistent and purely ideal community simply because there is never any danger that such an abstract entity will make a concrete demand on him.' Most anecdotes associated with Diogenes consistently depicts him as a nauseating and narcissistic sociopath, who lived by begging and stealing from others, who had no reservations about defecating, urinating, expectorating, or masturbating in public, and who specialized in the sadistic harassment of others. He had no regard for social propriety, no respect for others, but even more telling, he had no capacity for loyalty and self-sacrifice—the key virtues without which civic life itself is impossible. One is reluctant to assert that such attitudes may be a logical outgrowth of the cosmopolitan outlook, though they are certainly entirely consistent with it. And the fact that they are associated with the man whom Nussbaum offers as the *fons et origo* of cosmopolitanism seems a fact of more than passing importance." McClay writes, "Cant about being a 'citizen of the world' will always be with us, but it should arouse the deepest skepticism. There is all the difference in the world between a cosmopolitanism that requires one reluctantly to put aside deeply held patriotic sentiment for the sake of a higher cause, and a cosmopolitanism that never feels any such sentiment." Burke had it right: it is in the "little platoons" that we learn the virtues of adherence and excellence that can then be lived in more extended worlds. "Imagine," concludes McClay, "a Diogenes who had also learned to honor his father and mother, and not to steal from his neighbors—and you would have a very different, and better, Diogenes."

■ It appears that the customary spine-removal ceremony in Episcopal consecrations is not part of the African Rite. After the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) affirmed an openly gay priest, the Rev. Gene Robinson, as bishop of New Hampshire, the Anglicans of Uganda formally announced that its communion with ECUSA had been broken. Herewith a letter from Archbishop Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo on behalf of the Anglican Church of Uganda to ECUSA's Presiding Bishop, Frank Griswold: "Considering those things, we were shocked to receive a letter from you informing us of your decision to send a delegation to the enthronement of our new Archbishop in January, and your intention for the delegation to bring aid and assistance for the people who live in desperate conditions in the camps in Gulu that you have ignored for years. Recent comments by your staff suggesting that your proposed visit demonstrates that normal relations with the Church of Uganda continue have made your message clear: If we fall silent about what you have done—promoting unbiblical sexual immorality—and we overturn or ignore the decision to declare a severing of relationship with ECUSA, poor displaced persons will receive aid. Here is our response: The gospel of

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Jesus Christ is not for sale, even among the poorest of us who have no money. Eternal life, obedience to Jesus Christ, and conforming to his Word are more important. The Word of God is clear that you have chosen a course of separation that leads to spiritual destruction. Because we love you, we cannot let that go unanswered. If your hearts remain hardened to what the Bible clearly teaches, and your ears remain deaf to the cries of other Christians, genuine love demands that we do not pretend that everything is normal. As a result any delegation you send cannot be welcomed, received, or seated. Neither can we share fellowship nor even receive desperately needed resources. If, however, you repent and return to the Lord, it would be an occasion of great joy." Repent. Imagine that.

■ In making the case for the indispensability of the resurrection in the Christian understanding of reality, St. Paul asks: "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?" (I Corinthians 15) Apparently there were those who asked for a second baptism on behalf of a deceased pagan relative, and Paul refers to this in making a point while not judging the practice one way or another. This is the only New Testament mention of the practice and it was not received as part of the apostolic tradition. The practice was featured, however, in the alleged revelations to Joseph Smith in the nineteenth century. Today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) maintains an International Genealogical Index with biographical information on more than 400 million people, and from that index are drawn the names of those who are vicariously baptized. In 1995, there was something of a ruckus when it came to light that the index included 380,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust. An association of Holocaust survivors demanded that such names be removed and the LDS agreed, but now it is charged that they've reneged on the agreement. A Mormon spokesman protests that it would be nearly impossible constantly to go through the ever-expanding list of names to eliminate Holocaust victims. "When the church is made aware of documented concerns, action is taken in compliance with the agreement," he said. This business is passing strange. Why remove just Holocaust victims? Why not all Jews, of whom there must be many in the index? More interestingly, why do some Jews take so seriously a practice that everyone else views as nothing more than a Mormon curiosity? Is it possible that they believe vicarious baptism really turns dead Jews into Mormons? A similar question was joined a decade ago when Jewish organizations vociferously protested a Carmelite convent near Auschwitz. The sisters were praying for all the victims of Auschwitz, including Jews, and this, it was protested, was an effort to "Christianize" the Holocaust. A very real issue is engaged here. Some Jewish thinkers contend that the Holocaust must remain forever a sphere of the absolute reign of evil, untouched and untouchable by any hint of redemption. Christians cannot agree that any aspect of the creation is beyond the reach of redemption. Neither, it seems, can Mormons. The survivors group is threatening to go to court to enforce their Manichaean-like absolutizing of the triumph of evil. Of course, theirs is not a position shared by all Jews. I hold no brief for the vicarious baptism of the dead, but this is at bottom a theological dispute. Moreover, and the 1995 agreement notwithstanding, from the LDS perspective it must seem far from clear why children or grandchildren should have veto power over the bestowal of a spiritual benefit upon a dead ancestor. Evidently, both the Mormons who do the baptizing and the Jews who protest their doing it believe that it effects a change in the identity and/or spiritual status of the one vicariously baptized. One expects Mormons to believe that is the case, but it seems odd for Jews to fear that it may be the case. In any event, it is unlikely that the courts will try to settle the dispute. On the other hand, after the judicial usurpation of politics, the judicial usurpation of theology may be next.

■ As you know, the Supreme Court will soon be coming down with a decision on *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*. The Ninth Circuit ruled that "one nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance violates the no-establishment provision of the First Amendment's religion clause, and most observers expect that decision will be reversed. Of more than passing interest, the American Jewish Congress (AJC)—among the strictest of strict separationists—has submitted an amicus brief urging reversal. Says AJC lawyer Marc Stern, "I think every one of us devoutly wishes this case had never been brought. Newdow might be right in a platonic sense . . . but in the messy world in which we live, it's hard to see how any good can come of it." In the messy world in which we live, the AJC fears that, if the Supremes uphold Newdow, there will promptly be proposed and passed a constitutional amendment allowing not only the Pledge of Allegiance but a host of other religious intrusions upon the naked public square. Immediately after the Ninth Circuit decision, the House of Representatives passed by a vote of 400-7 a binding resolution in support of reciting the

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Pledge. So, while AJC and others may support Newdow in principle, they know it is a big-time loser politically. As usual, they have a way for the Court to nullify the convictions of the unenlightened people and their representatives. The Court should rule, they say, that "under God" has become so empty of religious meaning that it does not rise to the level of an establishment of religion. In this view, "under God," "In God We Trust," and similar phrases and symbols in public are no more than what Justice Brennan in 1984, borrowing a phrase from Eugene Rostow, called "ceremonial Deism." In other words, such references to God in public are permissible because nobody really believes what they say. In a nation in which 95 percent of the people say they believe in God, the Supreme Court should rule that nobody, or at least nobody that matters, believes in God. Why not? Maybe the Court will next rule that pigs can fly. To the judicial usurpation of politics add the judicial suspension of reality.

■ It is not easy to be transgressive in discussing "the transgressive" in literature and the arts. Anthony Julius comes close, however, in *Transgressions: The Offences of Art* (University of Chicago Press, 272 pp., $35). Reviewing the book in the *New York Sun*, Adam Kirsch observes: "It is not a criticism but a compliment to say that Mr. Julius' book leaves many unanswered questions. How can we distinguish between sterile shock art and art that genuinely engages with convention? In which category, for instance, do we place Ron Mueck's 'Dead Dad,' a portrait of the naked corpse of the artist's father, which is both shockingly impious and an homage to paintings by Mantegna and Manet? More broadly, why has art entered an age of criticism, in which new works are intelligible only as comments on earlier works? Does there exist for art, as Adorno thought there did for music, a sort of Hegelian path that leads inevitably to the completion, exhaustion, and suicide of art itself?" Of course we must hope that is not the case. But one does get the impression of decadence feeding on itself, while denying what it is doing. I recently listened to Andres Serrano explaining in tones of injured innocence that he was shocked that people were shocked by his "Piss Christ," in which he submerged a crucifix in his own urine. "I just thought it would be an interesting artistic expression," he said. Julius suggests that transgressive art is of three types: the innovative that attacks artistic conventions; the taboo-breaking that attacks the audience's pieties; and the political that attacks a specific regime. Mr. Kirsch thinks that much transgressive art invokes a taboo, not to revoke it in the name of reason, but simply to provoke the viewer. "Such art—like Gilbert and George's scatological paintings, or Marcus Harvey's portrait of the child-murderer Myra Hindley—actually colludes with taboo, plugging into its electric current for the sake of delivering a shock." Following Midge Decter's counsel to "think low," one might note the additional and vulgarly capitalist fact that many artists work in the hope of becoming rich and famous, and many therefore do the things that the rich and famous will buy for very big money. The hypothesis about the Hegelian path has its charms, but following the money will likely lead one closer to the truth. And why do people pay for the meretricious and ugly? The most obvious answer is snobbery. There hanging on the wall is the declaration that you are a sophisticate, incapable of being shocked, and far removed from the booboisie who are offended. Joining in chic chatter about finding excrement ever so meaningful is the price of admission to the company of the knowing. At some point, the market will shift and the knowing will bid up the price of the creatively new thing called anti-transgressive art. It is not unlike the seasonal rise and fall of hemlines, although, for the most part, less interesting. And the seasons of artistic fashion are so very long.

■ "Water, An Essential Element of Life." That is the lead item in *Origins*, a Catholic documentary service. "Water, an Essential Element of Life" is a major and perhaps eagerly awaited statement by the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace. Last year was the UN International Year of Water. The statement declares, "Sufficient and safe drinking water is a precondition for the realization of other human rights. There is a growing movement to formally adopt a human right to water." Without drinking water, people cannot live and therefore cannot exercise their rights. Obversely, those who have drinking water can violate the rights of others. "When water is scarce, competition for limited supplies has led nations to see water as a matter of national or regional security," the pontifical council has concluded. "Access and deprivation underlie most water decisions. Hence, linkages between water policy and ethics increasingly emerge." Moreover, "the poor suffer far more from the scarcity of water than do the wealthy." The principal difficulty involving water today, the pontifical council discovered, "is not one of absolute scarcity but of distribution." It seems that some places have too much water and other places have too little. There is an unconfirmed report that under discussion at the UN is an International Year of Air. If that ambitious step is taken, informed observers say, the Pontifical

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Council on Justice and Peace will be ready with a major statement, "Air, An Essential Element of Life."

■ Brian Anderson of *City Journal* and his wife, Amy, send their five-year-old to kindergarten at a Catholic school in Westchester County, New York. At a parents' meeting, the pastor, Father "Bill," announced a new curriculum in which he would be teaching peace studies. He went on to explain that we must not let September 11, 2001, be hijacked by the warmongers, that we must address the root causes of terrorism, and that there are fanatics on our side as well. With these and other half-truisms did he discomfort the parents. Anderson writes: "Ultimately, Father Bill's 'peace studies,' like other political causes espoused by church leaders since the 1960s, undermines the Church's already battered moral authority. My son's experience illustrates the point. After a service presided over by Father Bill, he told me: 'You must never war, Daddy—that's what Father says.' I had to correct him: Sometimes there are bad men in the world, and we need force to stop them. On reflection, he had no problem with that. One of his favorite television shows is 'Justice League,' chronicling the (often violent) adventures of Superman, Batman, and other heroes as they oppose monstrous villains. However, now he's likely to treat all of what Father Bill says with greater skepticism. The pastor's radicalism hasn't outweighed the other advantages of choosing a Catholic education for our boy. But it sure has made that choice less satisfying." The most important line there is about the skepticism implanted in the boy. When clergy teach opinion as doctrine, they invite the suspicion that doctrine is no more than opinion.

■ I don't want to make too much of it, but Peter Singer of Princeton University, whom I have regularly referred to as "the philosopher from nowhere," has a long essay in the *New York Review of Books* on the thirtieth anniversary of the animal rights movement. The essay immediately preceding his is a reflection on a novel by Aleksandar Hemon, *Nowhere Man*. There is possibly an editor there with a sense of humor. Singer's ethical utilitarianism is a form of rationalism that rigorously prescinds from tradition, habit, instinct, or anything that smacks of authority, especially religious authority. This leads him to a position of equal consideration for all sentient beings. The core question, he writes, is this: "Should all and only human beings be protected by rights, when some nonhuman animals are superior in their intellectual capacities, and have richer emotional lives, than some human beings?" Singer answers that question in the negative and declares that those who disagree are guilty of "speciesism." His contention is "that a difference of species is not an ethically defensible ground for giving less consideration to the interests of a sentient being than we give to similar interests of a member of our own species." Question: If a house containing a healthy chimp and a severely retarded child is on fire, which would Peter Singer try to rescue? Maybe neither, since a utilitarian argument might be made that neither is worth risking the more valuable life of Peter Singer. I would like to think, however, that his human decency would trump his ethical theory and he would try to rescue the child. But maybe not.

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6300 W. 41 St.
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e-mail: sboese@aogsf.com

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e-mail: joeandsima@hotmail.com
In Kalamazoo, Michigan:
Harold J. Harris
111 S. Clarendon St.
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006
e-mail: hharris@kzoo.edu
In Calgary, Canada:
Deacon John Doll
8 Springbank Court S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T3E 3S8
Canada
e-mail: johndoll@telus.net
In Shanghai, China:
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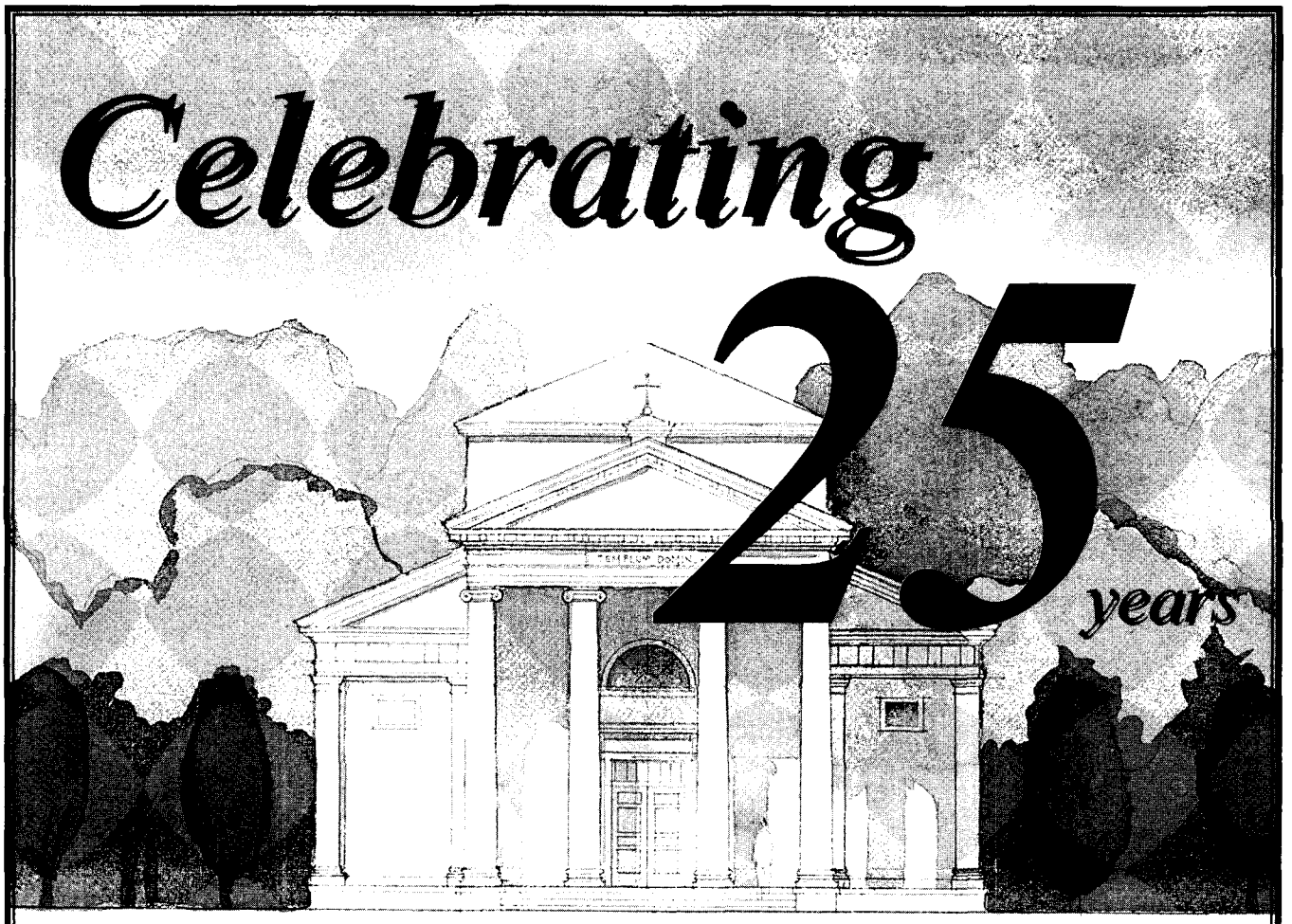

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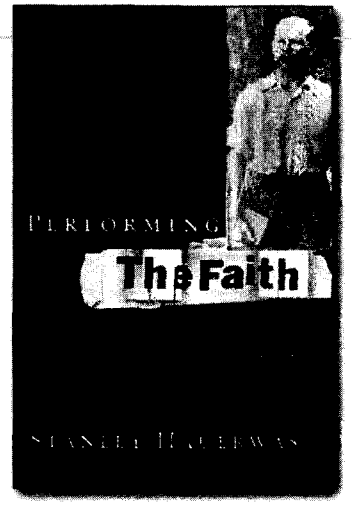

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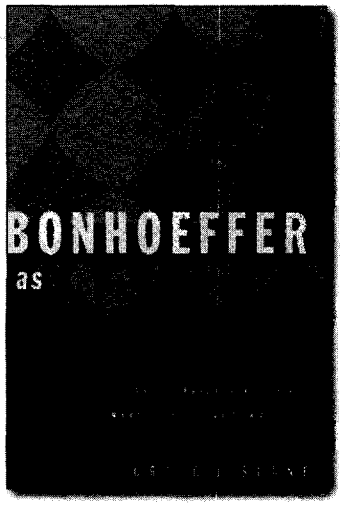

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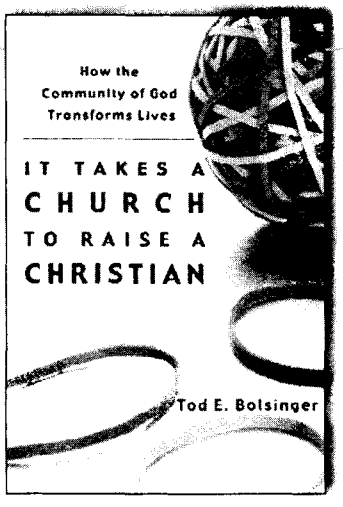

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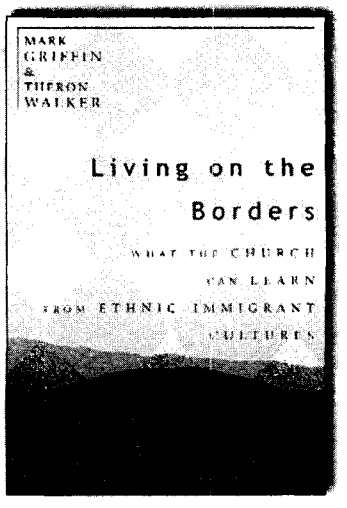

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